Education Issue

THE NEW REPUBLIC

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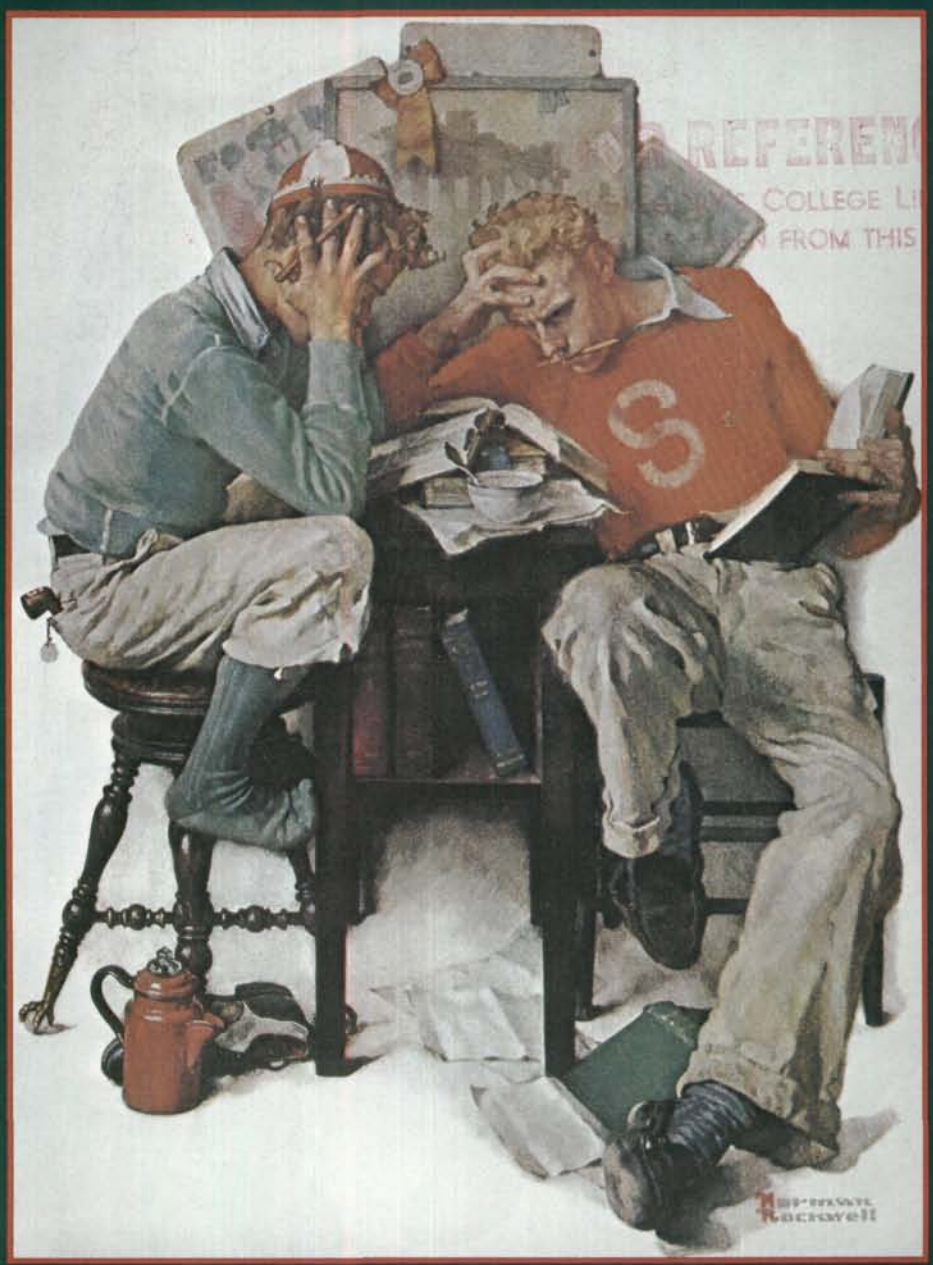

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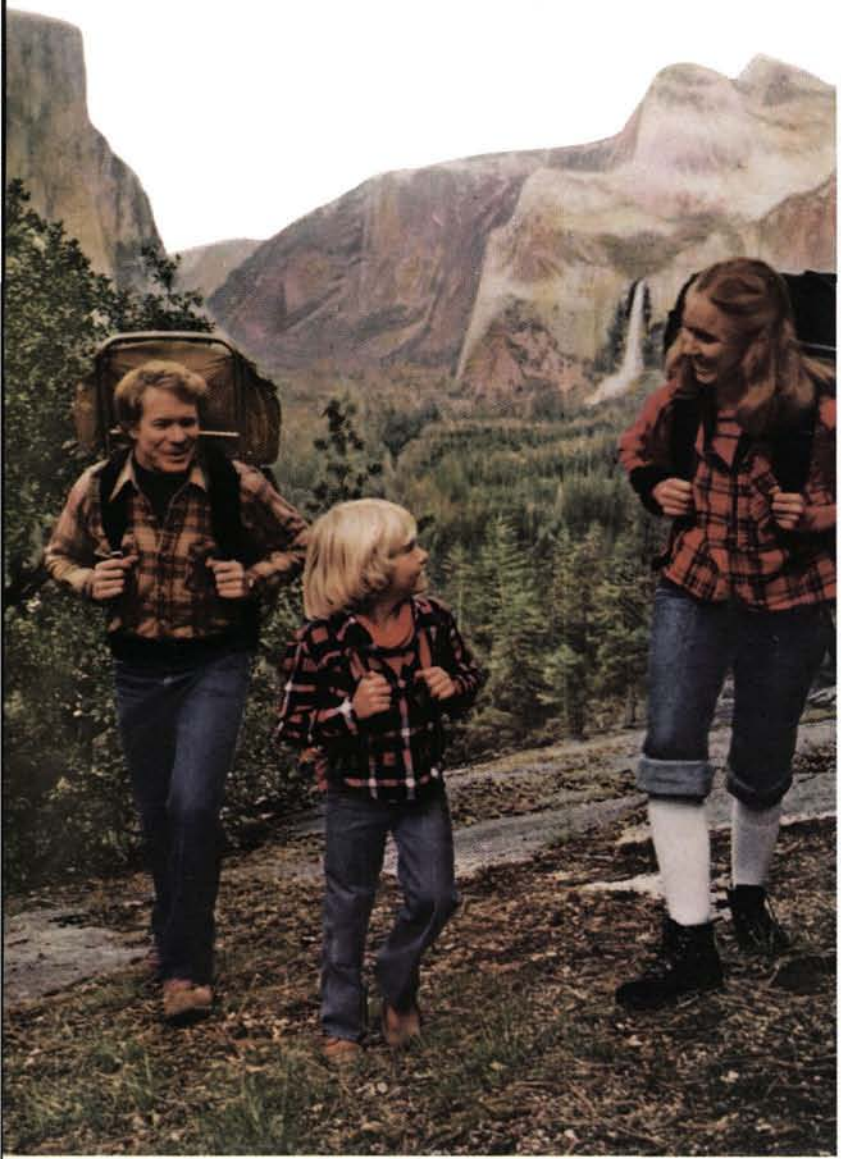
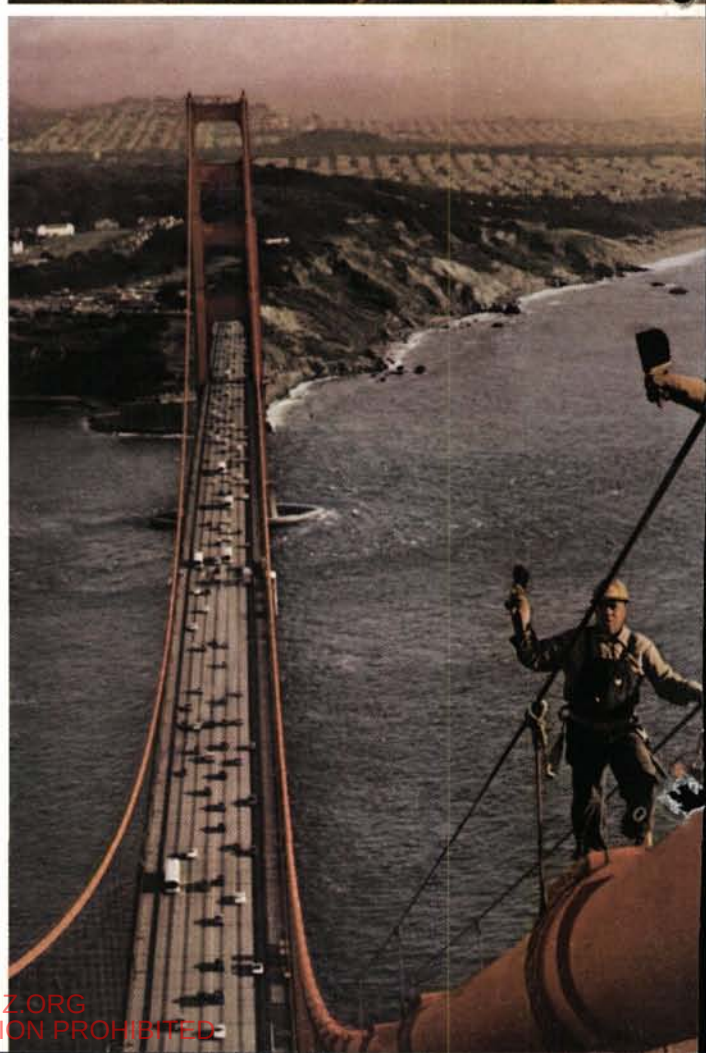
This is one of our home states: California

Californians





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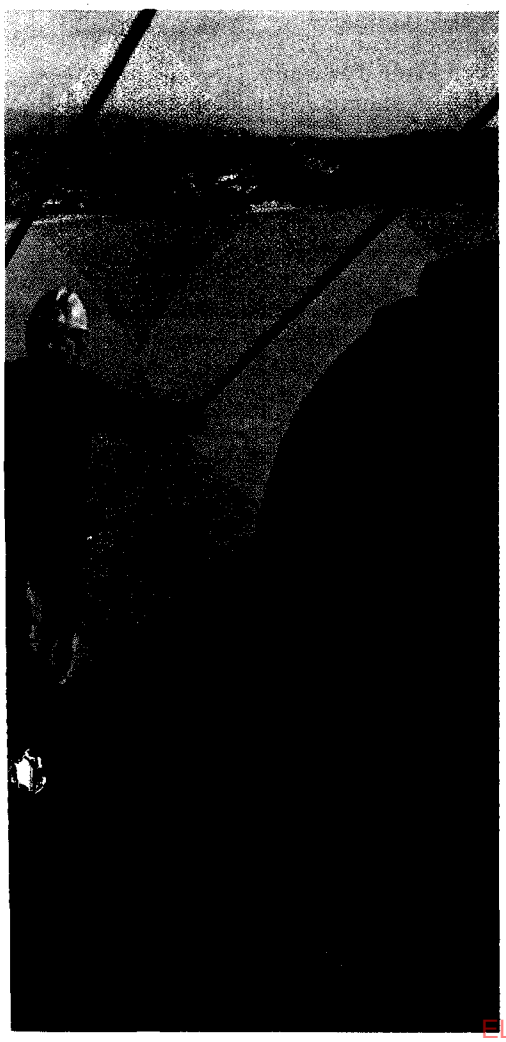
make it golden.



In Maine, the sound of the sea is bred in the bone; in New Hampshire, the silence of the mountains. Kansans live intimately with sun and rain, and Arizonans with the desert.

The Californian feels the elemental tug of all these—the vast Pacific, High Sierra, sun-drenched valleys and sun-baked deserts—and it makes him different. From the fishermen off the Pacific coast to the backpacking family in Yosemite to the bridge painters high over the Golden Gate, Californians live, work and play in ways as diverse as their state.

But they are all alike in one way: they are all innovators. They had to be, from the beginning. California has a magnificent coast but not enough harbors—so they built the largest man-made harbor in the world. It's a land of rich soil but without enough water—so Californians constructed one of the world's most extensive irrigation systems.

Californians innovate in nearly everything from fads and fashions to new lifestyles—and often the rest of us follow their lead. They were, among other things, the first to make our famous Marlboro brand the Number One selling cigarette, two years before the rest of the world.

But what delights Californians most is finding better ways to live with nature. The lemon groves of our Ventura Coastal Corporation, for instance—which supply the refreshing flavor of our 7UP—grow on hillsides so steep that they were, to all but Californians, "unplantable." Similarly under-used hillsides now provide golf courses and homesites for our prize-winning community at Mission Viejo. At San Francisco, our Milprint plant creates innovative packaging to protect California's food products. And at our spanking new brewery at Irwindale, our Miller Brewing Company recycles tons of valuable aluminum cans—at a social and economic profit to all Californians.

California's natural riches may well have made it the "Golden State" even before the first Indians arrived. But today's California is golden because Californians make it golden.

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Photographs by Larry Dale Gordon of Los Angeles

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TRB

from Washington
April 18, 1981

Population Control

Ike's fluffy eyebrows quivered with distaste. He had been asked, at his Friday press conference, November 27, 1959, if he favored American foreign aid to help developing countries control population. "By golly," he exclaimed, "I cannot imagine anything more completely a subject that is not a proper political or governmental activity or function or responsibility!" It was a good Eisenhower mouthful. It meant, "No." How quickly time changes. Ike himself was to change on the issue before it was over.

Every politician knew that the subject of birth control was dangerous. To his credit, Senator Ernest Gruening, Democrat of Alaska, had the courage to hold hearings on the subject of population and foreign aid. Gruening was the only senator in the hearing room. A succession of witnesses were telling about world population. Anybody who could add could see the global problem. The small planet Earth was getting crowded.

The process continues. Every 24 hours 200,000 more people—about the population of Des Moines—join Earth's inhabitants. Every 12 months the total rises 73 million—more than the population of West Germany. Ninety percent of the increase comes in the so-called developing countries, the have-nots. Yes, said former World Bank president Robert McNamara, "except for thermonuclear war, population growth is the gravest issue the world faces." The *rate* of growth over the world has slowed perceptibly, but the world will have its next 1.8 billion people in 20 years; that will mean 6.3 billion people by the year 2000—an extraordinary jump.

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The CBS Evening News had a broadcast March 19 showing a congested area in Karamoja, a district of Uganda. There were pathetic, contorted, starving children with pipe legs and bloated bellies. Dan Rather commented to Tom Fenton in London that it was "horrible; almost too gruesome." Diet deficiencies had swollen their stomachs and yet the kids, every now and then, could manage a grin or a childish gesture; yes, they were human beings, not animals. Their mothers evidently loved them. We watched them on the color television sets in our living rooms.

George Marshall introduced the Marshall Plan in 1946: "The people of this country are distant from the troubled areas of the earth and it is hard for them to comprehend the plight and consequent reactions of long-suffering people." The Marshall aid represented about three percent of America's gross national product. In 1977 AID director John J. Gilligan complained that the budget for the Agency for International Development was only $3.4 billion. Didn't we know a billion people were in "abject poverty," that 700 million were starving?

And now Peter McPherson has testified for the new proposed Reagan aid appropriation. Jimmy Carter asked for $2.4 billion. Reagan has cut that half a billion, to $1.9 billion. Why aid the foreigners? ask sensible taxpayers. America's foreign aid as a proportion of GNP has gone steadily down. Among the 16 leading nations giving foreign aid we were 13th in 1978 and 15th in 1979. Now we will be 16th. Sweden donates about one percent of its GNP: the proposed Reagan aid will be just under one-twentieth of one percent of GNP. Of course our sum will be immensely bigger because our GNP is bigger, but even Japan manages .26 percent of GNP.

How surprised Ike would be about one thing. McPherson comes right out and uses the words "family planning" and "contraceptives." McPherson says rapid population growth "exacerbates" problems; he says the US "has played an important part in bringing about decreased population growth rates. We have led in developing and disseminating the most widely used contraceptive methods; in providing contraceptives; in developing inexpensive service delivery systems; in training personnel; and in increasing motivation for family planning among individuals, communities, and national leaders."

Nothing could be franker than that. The language, let alone the act, would have been unthinkable a generation ago. And he adds that more aid is needed: "Today, demand for population programs far exceeds available resources." He asks $253.4 million for this particular aspect of foreign aid.

They were playing games with his aspect of human misery the other day in the Senate as the Democrats were trying to put back money slashed by the majority from the US school-lunch program, and conservative Jesse Helms, Republican of North Carolina (who has a sly sense of humor), "neatly scuppered them," as the London *Economist* put it, by proposing to increase school lunches by adding $200 million subtracted from foreign aid, and another $100 million from the food-for-peace program. Senator Edward Kennedy raged in vain against the inequity of feeding American children by stealing crusts from starving children overseas. But Helms must have his little whimsy.

Pope John Paul II ardently supports civil liberties and the world's downtrodden. In his extensive travels he also condemns birth control, frequently speaking in areas like Zaire or the Philippines where the population explosion is most serious. After 1,000 years the church reconciled itself to lending money with interest, which once was condemned as usury. Now the internal debate among 750 million church adherents over birth control concerns demographers. The Population Reference Bureau, Inc., a valuable nonprofit organization of this city, in its current bulletin, *Intercom*, discusses the matter through a member of its Board of Trustees, Father Francis X. Murphy, church historian and educator. Can the church give an effective lead, he asks doubtfully, in the growing threat of global overpopulation? San Francisco archbishop John Quinn is quoted as saying that the ban on contraceptives is being increasingly ignored by Catholic couples.

Witness McPherson before the Senate Appropriations Committee didn't go into this delicate matter, of course, but it is of some interest, I think, that the US is now engaged publicly in the kind of policy of birth control information dissemination abroad that so shocked Ike. Which will win out, hunger or population? The AID program, among other things, is desperately trying to increase global food production. It's a race against time.

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Correspondence

Who's causing inflation?

To the editors:

I must take strong exception to Paul A. London's article "Inflationary Secrets" (*TNR*, March 28). His premise, that inflation could be significantly reduced if only unionized workers in several key industries (steel production, auto manufacturing, and railroads) would reduce wage demands, is ludicrous.

First, workers in these industries are not, to paraphrase London, loading the burden of rising food, fuel, and interest costs onto the backs of other wage earners. While wage increases in these industries have risen faster than the national average, they have not kept pace with the Consumer Price Index. For example, railroad wages increased nine percent last year while the CPI rose 12 percent. Second, the combined work force of these three industries constitutes less than four percent of the non-agricultural work force. Hence even large sacrifices on their part would have little effect on inflation.

London also implies that wage levels are primarily dependent on the relative profitability of an industry. However, the level of skill required of a worker and the amount of responsibility he must assume are more important factors in determining wage rates. The steel and railroad labor forces are composed of many skilled and high-responsibility craft positions. This accounts for wage levels above the national average and above industries like electronics (to use London's comparison), in which much of the labor force is engaged in benchwork assembly and unsophisticated machine operation.

London's view of the industries in question is grossly inaccurate. The auto industry has been immensely profitable during most of the past decade. Only in the past few years have problems surfaced. For the same decade, London characterized the railroad industry as having "teetered on the edge of bankruptcy" with rail traffic stagnating. The fact is nine of the 10 largest US railroads posted record profits in 1979 (Conrail is the exception), with a record traffic level of 913.7 billion ton miles. Their profits are continuing to increase faster than inflation (Norfolk & Western's rose a spectacular 43 percent in 1980). Furthermore, railroad labor has been an important factor in achieving this record performance. Its rate of productivity has increased steadily the last few years and today's record profits are produced by a labor force that has shrunk 30 percent in the last 15 years.

London stated, "Statistics . . . tell the story." Here are some for him to ponder while he is seeking to curb inflation. In 1980 the "beleaguered" railroad industry experienced a 49 percent increase in fuel costs, a 15 percent increase in material costs, and nine percent increase in labor costs. Now what's at the heart of the problem?

George Gavalla
Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen
Local #65
Washington, DC

To the editors:

In his discussion of the inflationary effects of wages in the heavy industries ("Inflationary Secrets," *TNR*, March 28) Paul London quite rightly condemns the trade unions for gouging and the corporations for shrugging their shoulders.

But, perhaps to limit his thesis and make his point more strongly, he left out a whole other segment of our society: the salaried and pensioned. The automatic increases built into federal civil service, many commercial contracts, Social Security, and pensions, known benignly simply as "indexing," is certainly equally at fault. So long as our Congress, our management cadres, and our pensioners can get more money each year for doing nothing more than they did the year before, it is going to be hard to call on just one segment of our society to set an example of concern for the problem of inflation.

John Hamilton
Charleston, South Carolina

Solidarity from the pope

To the editors:

In his generally cogent analysis of Poland's *Solidarność* ("Solidarity Forever," *TNR*, March 21), Abraham Brumberg comments on the surprise of most observers at the nonviolent and disciplined nature of the Polish workers' movement, and cites several and, to my mind, not fully convincing explanations of this phenomenon. Beyond a brief reference to "the enormous influence of the Catholic church and of the various lay groups around it," Brumberg ignores the most obvious religious factor: the election of Karol Wojtyla as pope in October 1978 and his return to Poland in June 1979 for a series of remarkably joyous—and orderly—days of freedom. It is perhaps not surprising that what might be termed the liberating self-confidence borne of Wojtyla's elevation and triumphant homecoming spilled over into a genuine movement of worker solidarity.

Wladyslaw Pleszczynski, Managing Editor
The American Spectator
Bloomington, Indiana

M.M.K. and M.E.K. on NPR

To the editors:

Morton Kondracke (Washington Diarist, *TNR*, March 21) obviously lives in Washington. His comments about "All Things Considered" prove he doesn't live in Manistee, Michigan. Do you know what choice I have if I turn on the radio? Paul Harvey three times a day and no rebuttal. Rock music. Sports. Local news. Commercials.

I *can* get "All Things Considered." It's a bit noisy, but oh so refreshing! "All Things Considered," *TNR*, and other magazines help keep my blood pressure down. "All Things Considered" is the best program offered. And Kondracke, from the glut of Washington, thinks it should be canceled. All I can say is—you try living on a diet of Paul Harvey and when you bang the walls, it won't be to talk with Mort.

Mavis Schindler
Manistee, Michigan

The editors reply:

M.M.K. is Morton Kondracke. M.E.K. is Michael Kinsley. M.M.K. supports National Public Radio, M.E.K. doesn't.

In the beginning

To the editors:

According to Niles Eldredge ("Creationism Isn't Science," *TNR*, April 4) creationists have been effective at getting

(continued on page 40)

The editors welcome correspondence from TNR's readers. Letters intended for publication should include the correspondent's full name, address, and telephone number, should be typed double-spaced, and held to under 200 words. Longer letters may be abridged due to lack of space.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

April 18, 1981

Schoolhouse Blues

The New Republic takes the unusual step this week of publishing eight articles on one subject. We are doing so because the topic, American education, is so important, and because American education, particularly public education, is in such a bad state. The miserable performance statistics are recounted for us in this issue by Diane Ravitch of Columbia University ("The Education America Deserves," page 23). Newspaper readers acquired more evidence last week with the publication of a new report by James Coleman of the University of Chicago maintaining that students get a better education in private high schools than in public ones. Other articles in this magazine indicate that federal categorical aid programs for education have done little to improve the quality of American schools (see "The Federal Schoolhouse," page 20), that the education establishment's preoccupation with social reform has undermined learning standards (see "Blackboard Jumble," page 17), and that higher education generally is in no better shape than elementary and secondary education. (See "Tangled Ivy," page 18.)

The unremitting bad news about public schools provides a powerful rationale for Congress to pass tuition tax credit legislation to give a financial break to parents who send their children to private schools. The Reagan administration has endorsed the concept, even though the president says that tax policy should not be used to achieve social goals. We oppose tax credits for all the reasons discussed by John Merrow in this issue ("Tuition Tax Dodge," page 10), and for a few more. Public education is one of the few institutions in American society that bind us into a democratic community rather than fragmenting us into interest groups. Tuition credits would hasten the atomizing process. It is astounding that a conservative administration would pursue a policy that would break down one of the great traditional sources of American unity and strength. Yet that is what the Reagan administration is doing.

Just at a time when public schools are in crisis, financial and intellectual, the Reagan administration has decided not only to encourage massive pupil transfers to private institutions, but also to cut back on federal funding of education by 25 percent. The administration is so preoccupied by the task of battling its twin bogeymen, the federal government and the Soviet Union, that it has no attention for the need to foster excellence in American institutions. Cutting back on education, including science education, actually will make America weaker, not stronger.

We support public education, but we understand the motives of parents who want an alternative to bad public schools. We sympathize particularly with poor parents who view education as the only means for their children to escape the ghetto. If the Reagan administration truly was interested in such persons, it would not be reducing education aid but increasing it, and using some of the additional money to fund a voucher plan. Poor parents would receive a ticket, a kind of educational food stamp, to cash in at the school of their choice, public or private. This plan, unlike tuition tax credits, would create incentives for public schools to improve.

Meanwhile, we can expect that the administration will let up on the federal government's commitment to school desegregation, administering yet another blow to the poor. As William Taylor points out in this issue ("Desegregation Works," page 14), all studies show that disadvantaged children make gains when placed in classes with middle-class students. The better-off children suffer no educational ill-effects, and their cultural experience is enriched.

But if Ronald Reagan is bad for public education, he is not the only one. The American education establishment, and particularly the National Education Association, is just as harmful. Enough studies have been done, in both England and America, to establish that it doesn't take a magician to make a good school. It takes a strong principal, a disciplined atmosphere, high expectations, homework, individual attention to students, an emphasis on basic skills and intellectual rigor,

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and systematic evaluation of pupil (and teacher) performance. As Dorothy Wickenden demonstrates ("How Schools Succeed," page 11), application of such methods can produce results even in much-maligned Washington, DC. But nearly every necessary step to high-quality American public education is being fought by, of all people, the nation's largest teachers' union. The NEA supports seniority systems that prevent principals from firing inept teachers. It has taken almost no interest in the declining national test scores, other than to question the validity of the tests. Rather than campaigning for better education, it has spent its time and money campaigning for political candidates, in hopes of accumulating power. Its monument is the Department of Education, a bureaucratic honeypot for educational special interests. Its presidential candidate was Jimmy Carter, but in disserving American schoolchildren, it is an ally of Ronald Reagan.

America can have high-quality public schools again, both in the suburbs and in the ghettos. Models of quality can be found in many cities, and formulas for quality are available in the current literature. But getting quality will require work—by parents, by school boards, by local newspapers, by school administrators, teachers' colleges, and teachers. It also would help to have imaginative leadership at the national level.

Bracing the Allies

Last week Hans-Dietrich Genscher, the West German foreign minister, had talks with Brezhnev in Moscow. While he was there, Soviet transports were roaring into Polish airports, bringing supplies and threatening invasion, by osmosis or otherwise. Ideological supplies were sent in, too. The Czech press sang the praises of socialist internationalism and fraternal assistance. And in a chilling echo of 40 years ago, East Germany warned the Poles that their breathing disturbs the stability of the region. One might have expected Genscher to urge the Russians to keep their hands off Poland or at least to press them regarding their intentions. But as the *New York Times* reported, when Soviet leaders made no substantive statements about Poland during his long talks, "in keeping with diplomatic nicety . . . Mr. Genscher refrained from pressing them to discuss a subject which they clearly wished to avoid."

Now, this might be dismissed simply as excessive courtesy by a man trained to swallow lies for his country. But the Germans do not always display such restraint. They have been known, for example, to give advice to the United States on policy in El Salvador and to Israel on policy toward the Palestinians. They seem reluctant, however, to give the Soviets advice on anything. The reasons are not hard to find. First of all, they are on the front line. They find the Soviets within howitzer and not ICBM range. More important, their freedom has been circumscribed by *ostpolitik*. One of the principal purposes of detente was to create "a web of relations" that would make moderation a Soviet interest. To some extent, this policy has succeeded. The Soviets might have squeezed Poland long ago if they did not fear jeopardizing their links with the West. But dependence is a two-way street. Western nations have found themselves equally constrained by detente. When the US tried to orchestrate an allied response to the Afghanistan invasion, it failed to rally its partners to a uniform imposition of sanctions or even to a purely symbolic boycott of the Olympics.

West Germans have the greatest stake of all in relaxed East-West relations. They have an enormous emotional and financial investment in *ostpolitik*: huge outstanding loans to the Soviet bloc, growing trade and energy dependence, and a fragile understanding granting them limited access to their families in the other Germany. They have a lot to lose by asking indiscreet questions that would anger the Russians. They would have even more to lose if called upon by the US to join a unified Western response to Soviet intervention.

Yet the possibility of such an allied response weighs heavily in Soviet calculations. True, we hardly batted an eye over Hungary and began pressing the Soviets for strategic arms talks within months after Czechoslovakia. But the Soviets know that an unbroken boycott against them can be effective. Their strategy, therefore, is to wean one or two key countries away from any Western response. That would not only satisfy their needs for high technology and other imports, it would demoralize the other Western nations. This happened with the grain embargo. American farmers make the case, with some justice, that when Argentina and Australia began selling to the Soviets, the American embargo became a case of shooting oneself in the foot.

Since the Reagan election, the Soviets have conducted a vigorous *Europolitik*, consciously aimed at dividing Europe from the United States. Brezhnev's February speech offered SALT discussions and a summit. More recently, he called for negotiations on theater nuclear weapons. These overtures are directed more at European capitals than at Washington. Their purpose is to convince the Europeans that relaxation of tensions is being prevented by the US and could be promoted by an accommodating Western Europe.

A Soviet invasion of Poland might undo their European policy. The Soviets are a conservative power.

Staff Promotions

With this issue, Kris Klasman is promoted to controller of *The New Republic* and Patty Hardee becomes circulation director.

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What in the World is Going On?

It's a good question. And these days world events are so puzzling that the question is hard to answer. Newsmagazines don't help much. Nor do the official opinions and pronouncements of the academic journals. They leave you unable to comprehend or cope with the Ayatollah Khomeini, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, or the world refugee crisis now touching Florida's shores.

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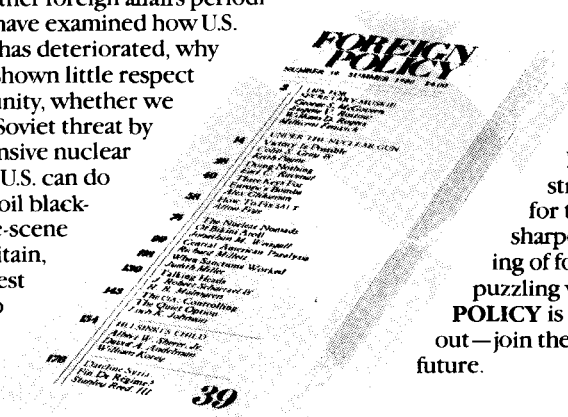

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They do not like to run high risks. Therefore, the more they remain convinced that a unified Western response is likely, the more difficult it will be for them to move on Poland. The single most important thing that the West can do on behalf of Poland is convince the Soviets now that intervention would lead to a total interruption of technology transfers, financial credits, and diplomatic relations. This strategy can work only if our wavering, nervous allies—principally Germany and Japan—line up behind us. This can be done in two ways. President Reagan might borrow some of the bravado he misplaced over the Panama Canal and apply it to our friends: "We rebuilt them, we protected them, and, on this one, they'd better be with us." Or he could more gently make the point that if they prefer to wave an umbrella at the Soviet threat for the sake of peace in our time, it makes little sense for us to continue to keep our protective umbrella over them. After all, American troops in Germany and Japan serve merely as a trip wire to guarantee world war in the case of an attack on Germany or Japan. If accommodation or even just fat contracts is what our allies want, American troops on their soil are both an annoying provocation for the Soviets and a needless danger for us.

Even in the 1930s, after the spineless had sacrificed Czechoslovakia they were finally moved or shamed into action over Poland. Even the reactionary Hilaire Belloc wrote, "Poland is the test . . . if we waiver we are lost." In 1980 our allies refused to make a test of faraway Afghanistan. Why should we risk our prosperity for fanatical Moslems, fighting to bring back the 14th century? they asked. They don't have that excuse now.

A dubious idea whose time has come.

The Tuition Tax Dodge

The man from New Hampshire had never heard of a "tuition tax credit" but he thought it sounded like a good idea. He and his wife were both working, he said, and because their state doesn't provide kindergarten, they had to send their daughter to a private school. He wouldn't mind, he said, "getting some of that tuition money back at tax time."

This may be his year. A tuition tax credit bill came close in the last Congress (passed the House, lost narrowly in the Senate). This Congress is more conservative, and President Reagan, unlike his predecessor, supports the idea, as does the secretary of education. The idea is simple: if you send your child to a private school or college, you may subtract from your tax bill a specified amount (but not more than half) of the tuition. How much credit parents get depends on the bill, but the most publicized, the Moynihan-Packwood-Roth bill, provides $250 in the first year, $500 thereafter. Anyone who owed the IRS less than the credit would get the money in cash.

Tuition tax credits may have friends in high places in Washington, but most liberal and public education groups oppose them. The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* are condemning the idea with even more vigor than they did last time around. Other opponents are calling tuition tax credits a "pernicious danger" to the public schools, a "blatant raid on the Treasury," and—at least by implication—a threat to the stability of the Republic. Thirty organizations, including the PTA and associations of school principals, superintendents, school boards, and teachers have formed the National Coalition for Public Education to fight against tuition tax credits.

The opponents have a lot of ammunition available to fire at tuition tax credits, though some shells are more explosive than others. First is the constitutional or "church-state" argument: because about 85 percent of nonpublic school students are in parochial schools, giving tax credits amounts to state establishment of religion, which is expressly forbidden by the Constitution. Earlier attempts to aid nonpublic schools have been overturned on this ground, notably in the Supreme Court's rejection of New York State's plan, in the 1973 *Nyquist* decision. Supporters of tax credits argue that their legislation is different because the credits will go to families, not to religious schools or to churches. Senator Moynihan argues that if all religions are eligible (as they are under his bill), then no one religion is "established." If tax credit legislation passes, there is sure to be a church-state court test.

Another argument is that tax credits will go, indirectly, to white-only, segregationist academies (true), and directly to parents who are purposely buying segregated education (also true). Moreover, credits will encourage segregation-minded parents with children still in public school to flee (probably true). On the other side of the case, it's good to remember that private schools are, on the whole, more integrated than public schools. It isn't strictly true—as often claimed—that tuition credits benefit the rich the most. The prime beneficiaries, in fact, would be middle-class families. Most parents paying $4,000 to $5,000 to send a child to Andover or Groton don't need, and probably don't care about, a $500 tax credit. Parochial school tuition, though, is normally in the $400 to $1,200 range. Poor people would not benefit unless they could find a way to come up with half their children's tuition money, and then benefits would be delayed each year until after tax time.

There is a big question whether the US can afford the cost in lost tax revenues, which opponents such as Senator Ernest Hollings of South Carolina estimate will be four billion dollars a year. Because most members of Congress seem to have taken vows at the altar of the balanced budget, passage of tuition tax

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credit legislation would seem to mean even deeper domestic budget cuts, presumably from programs such as Title I, school breakfast and lunch, CETA, and other programs that help the poor.

It seems clear that tuition credits would be yet another advantage for private over public schools. Already public schools are required to serve everyone, but the private schools are selective, and don't have to enroll—or keep—the handicapped, the unmotivated, the unintelligent, the anti-social, and other hard-to-educate children. It's not fair for government to encourage more "skimming off the cream." Advocates of tuition credits claim that parents of private school students have to pay taxes to support public schools and tuition and that this is not fair. By that faulty logic, though, people who belong to country clubs or drive to work in their own cars should get tax credits for those outlays because, after all, their taxes are already paying for public parks and mass transit and they shouldn't have to "pay twice."

Tuition credits seem to invite the federal intrusion into education that conservatives claim to abhor. Who, for example, will distinguish between real and phony private schools? The logical investigator is the IRS rather than state education authorities. In reality, the IRS might do the job better. Private schools in most states are virtually unregulated, having only to meet fire and health code standards and teach US history. Fear of federal "meddling" does seem to have diminished, perhaps extinguished, the enthusiasm that fundamentalist Christian schools once had for tuition tax credits. Other private schools, like those in the National Association of Independent Schools, are talking bravely about finding "workable solutions."

Despite their dislike for each other, both US teacher unions, the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers, vigorously oppose tuition tax credits. Part of their reasoning is that with public school enrollment already declining, teachers cannot support anything that might shrink the student population further. Teaching jobs are at stake, in their view. The fact is, though, that nobody knows how many students would leave for private schools if tuition tax credits pass. Some opponents predict a whopping five percent—more than two million students. Other observers predict almost no movement, on the grounds that the tax credit is too small to induce parents to change. If the pessimists are right, though, tuition credits are likely to undermine public education and to spawn creation of thousands of new private schools, some of which will specialize in mischief as much as education.

All this represents a strong case against tuition tax credits, but there is one good argument on the other side: the need to shake up the public schools and the monopolistic-minded people who run them. Public educators as a group have forgotten that they work for the public. They have built up bureaucratic walls to protect themselves and have coated their policies in layers of jargon. It will take a drastic threat to make them responsive. Congressional and presidential moves toward tuition tax credits might do the trick. Clearly there are exceptions to the pattern of inadequacy in the public schools, but too few. Tuition tax credits are probably bad education policy and bad tax policy, but the threat they pose just might force the public schools to improve the quality of the education they offer and scare them into opening their doors to parents. Something has to do this, and soon.

John Merrow

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Kids *can* learn in Washington, DC.

How Schools Succeed

Colorful bulletin boards in the halls of Sidwell Friends Upper School in Northwest Washington, DC, display student collages on the theme of values. There are photographs of Bjorn Borg and a Nikon camera; a pastiche of words—vacation, natural, travel, good, family, L. L. Bean, happy; a *New Yorker* cartoon in which a well-heeled couple anatomizes the status of the cocktail party company. Students hanging out by their lockers worry about how they did on the math test. Posters advertise study in Spain, Outward Bound in North Carolina, an international summer camp in New Hampshire. Like most exclusive, competitive prep schools, Sidwell Friends cultivates a sense of privilege in its students. These kids have a confidence generated by the expectation that they will excel, and there is an academic intensity not found in Washington's public schools.

But as Sidwell principal Clint Wilkins admits, the students also tend to have a rather utilitarian approach to learning. They have come to Sidwell to be groomed for the country's best universities and the good life that follows. Sidwell is a predominantly white, upper-middle-class school, but Wilkins takes pride in the school's sensitivity about racial issues and he regularly meets with the Black Student Union. At one session, students discussed the public school alternative. One girl said she had considered leaving Sidwell because "it isn't racial," but added that her mother would never let her transfer to a public school. Another student retorted, "At Sidwell you can be a 'C' student and still get into a good college. . . . For me that's of the utmost importance. My father has 14 brothers and sisters. Not one of my cousins has ever done anything. . . . They wish they could have what I have. . . . My only example is my mom—she's done everything. . . . I

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know I want to be a lawyer. I want to get out there and make $75,000 and have a Mercedes and have my kids go to private school."

This statement seems to offer dramatic support for James Coleman's view that private schools are better than public schools and in some ways are less racially segregated. However, students and parents who have had firsthand experience with the DC public schools offer another perspective. At Wilson High School, a mile or so up the road from Sidwell Friends, the students are as varied in background as Sidwell's are homogeneous, and many are equally emphatic about the advantages of their school. Chris Johnstone, who left St. Albans (another of the area's most prestigious prep schools) to enroll at Wilson in 11th grade, says that the schools represent two realities: "St. Albans is highly pressured. Your entire life is learning. I didn't know there was more to life than studying until I came to Wilson. It's impressed upon you that to be accepted you have to be intellectual, get the best test scores. . . . Parents assume, 'My child has to be miserable through high school.' But high school is life. At Wilson you can enjoy it and work hard at the same time."

IN ALL THE DEBATES over the relative virtues of private and public school education, no one will dispute the truth that motivated students from families that stress the importance of educational achievement tend to do well in any school environment. But the ardent defenses of students at both Sidwell and Wilson emphasize another point as well. Private schools, for all their concentration on academic rigor, are limited in the kind of exposure their students receive. Public schools, with their large, heterogeneous student bodies and wide array of extracurricular activities and programs, offer an expansive social education as well as an academic or vocational one. They also are faced with the monumental task of attempting to be, as Clint Wilkins says, "all things to all people." Private school educators talk philosophically about their schools' missions. Public school educators, in the chaotic scramble to provide equal opportunities for all students, and in their diminishing standards and requirements, often forget just what their mission is.

Given the undeniable deficiencies of urban schools today and the pervasive cynicism about the state of public education, it is remarkable that students, parents, and teachers continue to find things to like about them. In Washington they see Wilson's student population (roughly 66 percent black, 18 percent white, seven percent Asian, and nine percent Hispanic) as a mirror of the city, a realistic life setting which shares the District's social tensions and administrative red tape as well as its cultural diversity. (Under the District's open enrollment policy, children are allowed to attend schools outside their neighborhoods as openings occur. However, in a school system whose student body is 96 percent black and 52 percent economically disadvantaged, Wilson is one of the few integrated schools.) Wilson students pride themselves on being self-sufficient and street-wise and scoff at their sheltered peers in the elite private schools. "A lot of animals go here," said one Wilson student. "People hear about violence and they decide to send their kids to the private schools. But you adjust; you don't get bothered unless you look scared."

WILSON IS OFTEN called DC's best public school, but it has the same troubles that plague the others: uninspired teachers and self-serving administrators, lack of equipment for science and sports, scuffles in the halls (more often class- than racially determined, it was repeatedly emphasized, and the most vicious fights apparently occur between girls), and even occasional shootings and stabbings (usually by outsiders who slip into the school unnoticed). Yet clearly Wilson offers a kind of education that the kids at Sidwell Friends are likely never to experience. Those who transferred from private schools to Wilson—good students who are applying to good colleges—admit that the academic standards are by and large inferior and the distractions greater in the public school, but they insist they would never go back. "When I pass by Wilson I feel a real sense of pride," one boy said with unabashed emotion. "I love this school." Another was more pragmatic: "It's life, man. You have to learn how to deal with it."

Learning to deal with life in urban schools can be trying. McKinley High sits across the city from Sidwell and Wilson, in Northeast Washington. This inner-city school with over 2,000 students (all black except for a few exchange students) faces problems that Sidwell, with its 400 hand-picked achievers, is spared. A. B. Lyle, a counselor at McKinley, says, "Many of these kids have fathers who have never gotten a decent job. They have seen too much frustration, living in households of depression. They have little self-respect and no role model."

High school classes often contain between 30 and 40 students (Sidwell's have between eight and 20) working at widely varying levels of achievement and ability. Howard Brown, an English teacher at Coolidge High, another inner-city school, says that in his ninth-grade class, 12 out of 35 students are functionally illiterate. Others will go on to some of the country's best universities. Alan Johnson, a math and computer programming teacher at McKinley who was making great progress in his remedial math class for students working at third- and fourth-grade levels, says that he can't possibly meet their needs in a heterogeneous group of 30. But the remedial class was phased out when the department lost a teacher and other teachers demanded that Johnson share the work load. Amidst departmental bickering, there is little discussion about the progress of students.

In all this confusion basic principles about learning, not to mention hundreds of ill-prepared students, inevitably get lost. Richard Brady, a math teacher who

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left Wilson for Sidwell Friends, says that at Wilson "there was a tremendous opportunity for interaction, but I didn't have the time to bring it off." He complains that administrators at Wilson, operating on a policy of benign neglect, were more interested in sins of commission than those of omission. "The administration was supportive of me doing what I wanted to do primarily because my classes were under control, not because they were interested in education. Public relations was their main concern. . . . There was no true evaluative system, no real discussion about teaching."

Wilson's students also bemoan the school's tangled bureaucracy and complain that the worst administrators are the bad teachers who were kicked upstairs. (Their rare contact with the administration occurs when there are disputes to settle, as, for example, when there is an announcement over the PA system taking the students to task for engaging in "negative snow conflict.") But the clever kids take matters into their own hands and quickly learn how to juggle their schedules so they get the better teachers. (It is not hard to find gifted teachers in the DC public high schools, but a powerful teachers' union and convoluted grievance procedures make it virtually impossible to eliminate the deadwood. In DC's tenure system, disastrous teachers are rarely fired; they are simply transferred to another school.) The teachers who know how to challenge students and direct their energies, who respect them but discipline them when the need arises, usually manage to get their kids to produce. And according to a teacher who has taught inner-city high school students for 24 years, the problems today stem more from poor preparation at the elementary and secondary school levels than from serious student attitude problems. "The students are eager. It's unlike the 1960s, that time of unrest, when we got so involved with civil rights, and kids were more interested in identifying themselves as people than they were in Shakespeare. They're coming back to it. They believe in the dream."

THE GENERAL PICTURE of the urban public schools, which may look hopelessly grim to many outsiders, shows internal signs not of lethargy and despair but of determined optimism. After 15 years or so of educational innovations that favored electives and greater student freedoms over traditional course requirements and caused standards to plummet, students in many classes are being made to work again. The number of course credits required for graduation from DC schools has been raised from 17½ to 20½, the foreign language requirement has been restored, standardized tests have been reinstituted, and promotional standards and a daunting program called the Competency Based Curriculum have gone into effect. Now students from elementary school through senior high are held back if they don't successfully complete specific requirements each semester.

There are tough, conscientious teachers in all urban high schools who are assigning more homework; demanding more essays; grilling students in vocabulary and spelling, multiplication and long-division; forbidding gum chewing, and insisting that students get to class on time. These teachers, like teachers in the strict Catholic schools, have few discipline or truancy problems. Typical classes at Sidwell Friends and at Wilson and McKinley differ more in the tenor of discussion than in how much information is absorbed. At Sidwell students are encouraged to theorize rather than to spout names, dates, and facts. A teacher in the history section of an 11th-grade American studies

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Vint Lawrence '81
Vint Lawrence

class acted as a moderator, not as a traditional instructor. A relaxed, unstructured discussion grew out of the students' reading in William Leuchtenburg's *The Perils of Prosperity*, with an easy give-and-take between teacher and students. At Wilson and McKinley the teachers must perform energetically to keep attention from flagging. Barbara Garcia chose the rapid-fire approach in her 11th-grade American history class at Wilson on March 20. The class was studying President Wilson's domestic policies. Within 45 minutes Garcia had discussed the derivation of the words Democrat and Republican; asked questions about recall and impeachment proceedings, monopolies, corporations, trusts, and muckrakers; shown a brief filmstrip; and given a concise, spirited history of the suffrage movement. Overall, Sidwell students were not obviously more knowledgeable about the subject under discussion, but they were more articulate, more confident in their assumptions than the kids at Wilson and McKinley. (One excited student in the history class at McKinley confused Andrew Jackson with Jesse Jackson; but then, a boy at Sidwell, when talk wandered to scandal-ridden presidencies, piped up with: "What about President Kennedy? He killed some girl.")

With purposeful leadership, public schools can match

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the quality of education available in private schools. But they continue to lose students, increasing numbers of middle-class black students in particular, to private, parochial, and wealthier suburban schools. (Enrollment in DC's public schools for the 1980 school year declined by about 6,100 students while nonpublic school enrollment increased by about 1,200 students.) If tuition tax credits are approved and the public school system fails to rehabilitate itself, public education will end by serving none but the poor and ineducable.

The common denominator of successful schools, whether they are independent or public, inner-city or suburban, is unconditional insistence upon high standards—in the teachers they hire, in the curricula they choose, and in the students they educate, slow and fast learners alike. The public school principals in DC and other urban areas who have gotten out of the office and into the halls and classrooms, who have actively sought parental involvement in their child's education, and the teachers who have stubbornly refused to compromise their expectations have seen the same gratifying results as their counterparts in private schools: motivated, enthusiastic students who understand why they are in school.

Dorothy Wickenden

Just ask the folks who've tried it.

Desegregation Works

In public education, as in other major institutions in American life, racial discrimination and conflict remain seemingly intractable problems. Each time a national commitment is made to redress enforced inequality—the Supreme Court's 1954 decision striking down school segregation laws, say, or passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964—quick rationalizations are offered for failing to follow through. These days, the conventional wisdom is that busing—the only tool for ending racial isolation in the public schools now available in most places—has proved a failure, and that desegregation itself has contributed to a decline in the quality of public education. Such claims buttress efforts in Congress to curtail the authority of federal courts in school desegregation cases.

The educational effect of school desegregation remedies is a legitimate question. The 1954 *Brown* decision rested on constitutional imperatives, not educational theories. However, it's clear, too, that the Court believed that school desegregation was a step toward giving minority children a chance to succeed educationally and economically and to become fully participating citizens in American society. If the Court was wrong, either initially or in its later decisions concerning remedy, better answers should be sought. But the Court was *not* wrong.

More than a decade of positive experience in communities that have come through the process has shown that desegregation, when it is done right, works. It is feasible, it is stable, it ultimately achieves community acceptance, and it enables many minority children to improve their achievement scores and earn places in better universities and professional schools. There are many things wrong with public schools in this country, but desegregation is not one of them.

Critics argue that efforts to desegregate are self-defeating because white parents inevitably will move away from racially mixed schools. When sociologist James Coleman made this "white flight" argument a few years ago, more careful researchers immediately pointed out that his conclusions were based on data from big cities where school desegregation had never been ordered. Demographers now agree that declines in the enrollments of central city schools stem far more from the continuing suburbanization of whites, a movement of 30 years' standing, than from school desegregation orders.

A more accurate measure of the workability of desegregation plans can be taken in the south, where school districts tend to be whole counties with no line separating city from suburbs. In districts such as Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina, and Tampa-Hillsborough, Florida, countywide desegregation plans involving extensive busing have been in effect for 10 years and they have proved remarkably stable and successful. Cynics say that enrollments remain stable under such plans because most parents, unable to afford private schools, have "no place to run." Perhaps, but the evidence points to more positive motivations as well. Metropolitan desegregation plans avoid the concentration of poor and minority students in a few schools and make it possible for almost all schools and classrooms to consist predominantly of middle-class students. Parents perceive such schools and classrooms as providing better educational environments than those in which most students are economically disadvantaged.

Despite the furor over busing, most parents are less concerned about how their children get to school than about the quality of their education. So parents have stayed with metropolitan-type plans in Florida, North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, and elsewhere. A recent *New York Times*/CBS News opinion poll showed that most people in communities that have undergone desegregation react favorably to the experience after three years.

There is growing evidence that when schools are desegregated on a metropolitan basis, the process actually leads to increased residential integration rather than to "white flight." This was the pattern in communities as diverse as Racine, Wisconsin; Wichita, Kansas; Riverside, California; and Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina. Wichita superintendent of

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schools Alvin Morris, commenting on the fact that black students live in practically all of the district's 74 attendance areas as compared with only seven or eight before desegregation, said, "I think this was brought about predominantly by our integration plan."

These results should not be surprising. As the courts have recognized, when schools are labeled by official practice or custom as "black" or "white," families tend to cluster around them on the same racial basis. Once schools are integrated, real estate brokers are less able to steer home-seekers along racial lines. As housing integration increases, the need for busing declines.

It is still an unresolved legal question whether the south's successful experience with desegregation will be extended to northern metropolitan areas where cities and suburbs are divided into separate school districts. In 1974, the Supreme Court by a five-to-four vote rejected a school desegregation plan covering the Detroit metropolitan area. But the Court did not rule out metropolitan busing absolutely, and since then lower courts have approved such plans for Wilmington, Louisville, and Indianapolis, while rejecting such a remedy in Atlanta. Metropolitan desegregation in Louisville and Wilmington has now been in effect for several years and has shown positive results mirroring those under the older southern plans.

If parents are staying with desegregated schools in many places, something useful must be going on in the classrooms. That is just what the evidence shows. Education researchers Robert Crain and Rita Mahard found, for example, that achievement scores of minority students increased significantly after desegregation in Sacramento, Fort Worth, Nashville, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, and Louisville. No study has concluded that white students suffered academically from desegregation, and only a handful of methodologically flawed surveys (among the 100 studies) suggested any achievement decline for minority students.

In fact, most researchers now have gone beyond the question of whether school desegregation leads to achievement gains, to identify the conditions under which it is likely to produce the best results. Some conclude that achievement gains are likely to be maximized when desegregation is begun in the early grades and when training programs help teachers adopt a sensible approach to the needs of low-income minority youngsters, avoiding the extremes of harsh treatment and patronizing praise for inadequate work. Studies indicate that progress is not likely to occur when testing is misused to resegregate minority students in classrooms for low achievers or the mentally retarded.

The gains that have flowed from school desegregation go far beyond what can be measured on standardized achievement tests. Over the past 15 years many more black students have enrolled in universities and in some graduate fields. Blacks have entered white-collar jobs, the professions, and skilled trades in more than token numbers. Much of this breakthrough is attributable to the general crumbling of overt racial barriers, but some can be traced to the ways desegregated public schools widen the horizons of minority youngsters. In Boston, for example, a researcher hostile to desegregation had to concede that black students from all income levels who were enrolled in integrated suburban schools wound up in better colleges and universities than their counterparts who remained in segregated schools in the city.

The process at work may be difficult to quantify, but it is not mysterious. High schools, D. W. Brogan once observed, are places "where students instruct each other in how to live in America." In central city schools, students learn the survival skills of the ghetto. In desegregated schools, both black children and white children learn the skills of mainstream America. As one black student, testifying about her experience in a desegregated school, told the US Civil Rights Commission, "In my old school people asked, 'Are you going to college?' In my new school they asked, 'Which college are you going to?'" Well-off white youngsters are victims of racial isolation as well. The racially and economically homogeneous suburban school is marked by sterility as much as the poor central city one is by disorder. They often share atmospheres of boredom and fearfulness, the widespread use of alcohol and drugs, and a closed-in world where geographic movement is tightly circumscribed. Both contrast unfavorably with integrated schools such as Seward Park and Newton in New York City, where students use the whole city as their learning lab and enrich each other with knowledge of different languages and cultures. For whites as well as blacks, efforts to revitalize public schools will pay dividends only if we can complete the job of eliminating race and class apartheid.

William L. Taylor

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It's Spanish for segregation.

Bilingual Mis-education

Bilingual education was one of the first victims of the Reagan administration, and when education secretary Terrel Bell delivered the *coup de grace* to the previous administration's plans for the program, it might have seemed another victory for conservatives and another blow to liberals. The Carter administration's regulations, in Bell's view, were "a symbol of federal meddling," an "intrusion on state and local responsibility,"

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and "incredibly costly." But from the very start bilingual education was a bad cause for liberals. The package looks right, but the contents are wrong. For rather than enlarging the educational and economic opportunities of disadvantaged, mostly Hispanic, children, it diminishes them. And it does so in programs that segregate the children from their black and white peers.

The 1968 Bilingual Education Act made federal funds available for instruction of non-English speaking students in their native tongue, but the initiative had to come from local schools. Bilingual education then was an option, not yet a right or a requirement. However, in the 1974 decision of *Lau v. Nichols*, a unanimous Supreme Court read the 1964 Civil Rights Act to require "affirmative steps to rectify the language deficiency" of children with limited English. While the Supreme Court specified no particular steps, HEW soon did. Departmental regulations known as the "Lau remedies" mandated bilingual education indirectly. It was a revision of these regulations by Carter's education secretary, Shirley Hufstedler, that Bell immediately scrapped.

There is no doubt that some southwestern schools were somewhat brutal in demanding that Spanish-speaking children learn English. As recently as the early 1960s pupils who spoke Spanish on the playground at some schools were punished. Nor is there doubt that the school drop-out rate for Hispanic children is high. About 70 percent never finish high school; only about seven percent finish college.

But from the recognition of these problems, the solution of bilingual education does not necessarily follow. Brutality is a problem that can be dealt with directly. A receptive educational environment does not require a Hispanic teacher who conducts classes in Spanish. In a recent report the president of the Carnegie Corporation concluded that "the public education system as a whole has neither welcomed Hispanic children nor been willing to deal with their learning problems in any effective way." American education, he said, has shunted these children into educational tracks designed for low achievers, classified them as mentally retarded or emotionally disturbed, and treated their cultural heritage with contempt. But neither contempt nor erroneous and invidious classification is inherent in all ethnically integrated education. And while some bright children with limited English undoubtedly have been labeled mentally incompetent, the unhappy fact is that many Hispanic pupils—like others from poor families—are indeed poor achievers, with high rates of emotional disturbance. Every child with limited English and low achievement needs help. The question is how best to provide it.

Proponents of bilingual education argue that classes taught in a child's native tongue enable that child to acquire fundamental skills while learning English. English in fact is easier to learn by a Spanish route, it is said. Becoming literate in a simpler language—one

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Vint Lawrence
Vint Lawrence

which is written as it sounds—eases the task of mastering one that is more complex. But there is no evidence that children in bilingual classes progress faster than peers with comparable language difficulties who are placed in regular classrooms or receive remedial help in English. The most important evidence that we have suggests otherwise. A four-year study of 11,500 Hispanic children conducted by a research institute under contract with the US Office of Education concluded that most children in bilingual programs are not deficient in English. Those who are, it found, are not in fact acquiring it. Moreover, with few exceptions the programs were aimed not at easing the transition to literacy in English (while encouraging competence in other subjects), but at maintaining a separate language and culture. Finally, whatever the language of instruction, children who started out alienated from school tended to remain so. The study found no evidence that children in bilingual programs were more eager to stay in school.

The methods used in that study have been criticized, but the sobering picture that it drew has not been reassuringly revised. Still, support for bilingual instruction, particularly among Hispanic activists, has not lessened. And the reason is clear: the programs provide both employment and political opportunities, as schools are forced to hire Hispanics without regular teaching credentials, and as students are molded into an ethnically conscious constituency. Moreover, both Hispanic leaders and their supporters in white civil rights circles are committed to ethnic pluralism. They do not believe in assimilation to a common culture, or in schools as transmitters of that culture. The whole notion of the melting pot, in their view, must be condemned.

The consequence of this commitment to the maintenance of ethnic diversity—to protecting people's dif-

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ferences, as one supportive legislator put it—was the proliferation of bilingual classrooms in which English-proficient students with Spanish surnames were isolated from their non-Hispanic peers and taught not only their "native" language (at the expense of instruction in English), but their "native" culture as well. Bilingual programs have become schools-within-schools, permanently protective ethnic enclaves. Of course not all students in such programs arrive speaking English. But many others have no recognized language at all; they speak a street Spanglish. And for them, becoming literate in English may be as easy as learning true Spanish.

This not to say that all programs conform to this model. But too many do—or seem to. Hard data are hard to come by, but these programs appear to provide not more equal but more *un*equal education. By and large, bilingual education is a disservice to Hispanic and other children of limited English proficiency. For in failing to provide these children with a solid grounding in English and failing to integrate them with the culture of their peers, it condemns them to the economically marginal existence that too many of their parents have endured. It closes the door, in other words, to educational and economic opportunity.

Abigail M. Thernstrom

Abigail M. Thernstrom, under contract with the 20th Century Fund, is writing a book on the impact of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

Do we want strong minds or soft hearts?

Blackboard Jumble

There is a tension in American education today over what the schools ought to be about. Should education concentrate primarily on building intellectual strength in pupils or should school curricula be designed chiefly to promote social reform? Should schools try to give students knowledge about the past and competence in traditional skills, or should they address themselves primarily to topics of apparent contemporary interest and "relevance"? The very existence of such a conflict suggests a diminished faith in the power of intellect to effect social reform—a lack of faith that the goals of civil rights and social equity can be served by the study of history, English, the sciences, and foreign languages.

This situation is nothing new. But it has never been more pressing or problematic. How can we be clear and decisive about the aims of education when churches, communities, and families pass many of their responsibilities to the schools and when the press and public clamor for them to serve a vast array of purposes, from vocational training, basic skills, and citizenship training to initial preparation for research specialization demanded by the interests of the country as a whole? It would be difficult to get a consensus in the best of times. It will be even harder in a period of tight budgets. But when it is increasingly difficult for schools to do everything, it is all the more important that we decide what we want them to do first. Unfortunately, it will be all too easy for various interest groups to push topical studies ostensibly likely to promote social reform ahead of rigorous study in the traditional disciplines.

The study of history, for example, has been under fire since early in this century for ignoring the newer social sciences and their methods of gathering data. The term "social studies" was introduced in 1913. As time went on, history requirements became significantly reduced in favor of "social studies" and now history itself often is merely considered one of a number of social studies in school curricula. It is not unusual for the National Education Association and the American Historical Association to stress the utility of history for citizenship training, rather than its value in providing the shared experience of the nation, Western civilization, or humankind as a whole. A recent textbook on social science methods claims that "history deals too much with the unique and too little with regularities in human contact." Most writing on social studies calls not for teaching social history but for social science skills such as "analyzing documents for bias" or "making inferences from graphs and computer printouts."

Contemporary school curricula show this influence vividly. Typical secondary school courses in the social studies emphasize "education for living," "world cultures and values," "economics and career plans," "marriage and the family," "acquisition of cultural beliefs," "groups in society," "hunger, over-population, energy, dissent, and minorities," "sociological factors which influence behavior," and "exploring human nature." The National Association of Secondary School Principals explained in a 1980 *Curriculum Report* that the "broader, pluralistic view of the 'social' in the social studies programs of our schools is certainly influenced and supported by the growing recognition of the values and problems we have in our own pluralistic society." Social studies is described there as "the field which should be more responsive to the changing facts and demands of the contemporary world."

By 1973, as a result of these trends, only 15.2 percent of American high school students were enrolled in United States history courses. And despite all the expressions of conviction by school planners that "a global view is rapidly becoming an aspect of all social studies courses" and their dedication to "understanding of cultures and conditions around the world," according to the National Center for Education and Statistics, in 1973 fewer than 20 percent of secondary

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school students were enrolled in foreign language courses of any kind, ancient or modern.

Federal legislation has encouraged the development of curriculum packages whose explicit purpose is to promote educational equality, eliminate the isolation of minorities, and advance ethnic heritage programs. The Women's Educational Equity Act of 1974, for example, authorized federal funding for "the development, evaluation, and dissemination . . . of curricula, textbooks, and other materials related to educational personnel . . . with special emphasis on programs and activities designed to provide educational equity." The Emergency School Aid Act (Title VII) authorized funds to write curricula aimed at "eliminating or preventing minority group isolation and improving the quality of education for all children." And the Ethnic Heritage Program authorized federal assistance in "planning, developing, establishing, and operating ethnic heritage studies programs."

The influence of these federal programs originates in the money they offer. Increasingly overwhelmed by rising expenses, school systems are tempted to turn to federal sources of funding for instructional programs. This and the outspokenness of interest groups on behalf of special studies make federal money impossible for many schools systems to resist. When federal funds are available to help teach the academic disciplines, schools have been equally responsive, indicating that it's the money rather than the curricula that means the most.

The social ideals behind these curriculum developments were not wrong. Certainly America has not yet fulfilled its dream of liberty and justice for all. We are not advocating a return to some "golden age" in American education—as, for example, when women and minorities were entirely ignored in history classes. But organizing school programs to foster social reform creates the erroneous idea that a "quick fix" for social problems is available through the schools. It also undermines the kind of intellectual preparation necessary for making conscientious and informed judgments about personal well-being and social policy.

Replacement of history with "social studies," for example, deprives students of a grasp of the political, military, and economic events that have shaped our world. It obscures the contribution of individuals and also the experience of social groups. The loss of a chronological grasp, of a sense of cultural development, limits the extent to which students can understand the heritage of ideas which underlie their high ideals of social justice. Using social studies skills on the present world simply can't replace the application of a historical sense.

The jargon of studies intended to promote social reform—"appreciation of culture and world values," "exploring human nature," "ethnic heritage programs," "global perspectives"—conceals a shallowness in the resulting curricula. It is not likely that students will come to any real understanding of human nature without studying literature and history. It's not likely that "global perspectives" will be informed if they are taught without geography and foreign languages. "Relevant" contemporary issues can't be grasped in any depth without some background in the natural sciences, mathematics, and economics. Popular, contemporary treatment of social issues leads, at most, to shallow understanding of those issues. What is worse, it teaches that history, literature, mathematics, science, and languages are not really very important in dealing with contemporary issues. Such studies promote nothing but uninformed and undisciplined conviction, which, even if right, has no roots in knowledge or reflection.

If past curricular trends prevail, in the name of social reform, we will finally lose sight of the idea that there is any shared experience and understanding which defines an educated people. Eventually, it is possible for the curriculum to become so fragmented that it would include men's studies as well as women's, and so on, with the resulting implication that there is no human condition—only the condition of socially defined groups or of isolated individuals. Should this happen, the prospects for social reform, for any measure of concern about the country as a whole, and for justice for all, will be bleak indeed. We will have sacrificed learning and gained nothing.

Judith S. Siegel and Edwin J. Delattre

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American colleges in authority crisis.

Tangled Ivy

"If we win, we will take control of your world, your corporations, your university, and attempt to mold a world in which we and other people can live as human beings." So wrote Mark Rudd, a junior at Columbia College, on April 22, 1968. A day later the campus was under siege; buildings were occupied, the dean held captive, the university president's office ransacked.

The two years following the Columbia uprising brought similar scenes to hundreds of other schools—sit-ins, strikes, even bombings. In May 1970 students were shot at Kent State and Jackson State. Colleges and universities around the country suspended classes and shut their doors.

When the fall semester arrived, however, the atmos-

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phere had changed. Schools reopened, classes resumed, the campus war was over. But just as American foreign policy still moves in the shadow of Vietnam, the academic policies that dominate our institutions of higher education continue to carry the residue of the barricade and the bullhorn.

The agenda facing higher education today is long and complicated. It includes the effects of proposed federal budget cuts, the dangers of governmental regulation, disputes over affirmative action, rising costs, and the coming decline in the number of high school graduates. But even if all these problems somehow could be solved, higher education still would be weakened by one pervasive hangover of the 1960s: the loss of faculty authority.

In the years of campus upheaval teachers and administrators sought desperately to placate rampaging students. These young people could not win power over the big world outside academe, but at least they could be granted some within. So university senates were created, composed, typically, of 25 to 50 percent students. The student senators sat side by side with faculty, debating university policy and governance. Students also were given membership on faculty committees, encouraged to vote on matters of curriculum, and even asked to help decide faculty appointments and promotions. Today such privileges are accepted as a matter of course at many institutions. Is it any wonder that students now assume that such participation is their innate right? Faculties have yielded their appropriate prerogatives to those who, by definition, lack the knowledge and experience essential to the legitimate exercise of academic authority.

The results should surprise no one. Most students, it turns out, do not favor imposing course requirements on each other. They do not favor examinations, low grades, or restrictions on freewheeling curricular options. Many faculty members find it convenient to share these views, for when laissez-faire becomes the guiding philosophy of education, life is even more comfortable for teachers than for students.

What quality of graduate is emerging from such an academic environment? Years ago Jacques Barzun noted:

> . . . what is observable at the end of the sixteen long years of an ordinary education: young men and women of unquestionable gifts, energy and zest, whose fine intelligence is not matched by strength of intellect. Freshness of taste and openness to novelty, yes. . . . But no knowledge that is precise and firm, no ability to do intellectual work with thoroughness and dispatch. Though here are college graduates, many of them cannot read accurately or write without travail and doubt, cannot utter their thoughts with fluency or force . . . cannot trust themselves to use the foreign language they have studied for eight years. . . .

A dismal picture. But these words were written in the 1950s, not in the 1970s. One shudders to imagine what Barzun would say about the present scene. Barzun considered it normal for students to take a foreign language for eight years. Now less than eight percent of college students are registered for foreign language courses. He complained that too many students were satisfied with the "gentleman's C." Now that grade is virtually extinct, having been succeeded by the "gentleperson's B+." Barzun despaired that graduate students did not know the difference between "i.e." and "e.g." Now, thanks to the abolition of comprehensive examinations at many graduate schools, including some of the most prestigious, advanced degrees are routinely awarded to people who know remarkably little about anything outside a subfield of specialization. An acquaintance of mine, recently awarded his PhD in philosophy from an Ivy League institution, admits that he has never read a word of Plato's *Dialogues*.

Some commentators insist that the students of today are brighter than their counterparts of two decades ago. That is supposed to explain why grades are much higher and requirements no longer necessary. But as the precipitate decline in Scholastic Aptitude Test and other test scores suggests, today's students are not unusually gifted en masse. Less is demanded of them while they are praised more generously.

Another common argument against requirements is that those entering college possess a worldliness that permits them to choose their own personal course of study. But in fact social sophistication confers no particular ability to design an educational program. Nor can it be a substitute for essential knowledge and skills that will enable students to make a success of their lives not only as workers but also as citizens in a free society. The first step toward this challenging goal is to realize the size of the challenge.

Several years ago I asked members of an introduc-

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tory philosophy class how they would react if their college were to require everyone to take courses in English composition, Western literature, Greek civilization, European civilization, philosophical analysis, music or art, a foreign language, sociology, psychology, government, economics, mathematics, and a laboratory science. They were appalled. "No one could handle all that," they wailed. They were astonished to hear that precisely those requirements had been in effect at their own college just a few years before.

Faculty members should recognize by now that establishing educational policies merely to accord with students' wishes is a dead end. A teacher has the responsibility to listen attentively to suggestions students may offer about the academic program, but a faculty worthy of respect responds to student needs, not student demands. And students may not be aware of their intellectual needs; that is why they are students.

A hopeful sign is the current movement to rethink the matter of requirements. Admittedly, enthusiasm for such reform is less than fervent, and many faculty members are still nervous that students may bridle. But even this tentative recognition that college graduates ought to acquire certain fundamental proficiencies is heartening.

What about the widespread practice of asking students to evaluate faculty members for appointment and promotion? Nothing is amiss in consulting students about whether a teacher meets class regularly or is available for consultation. But students are not in a position to judge whether teachers present material competently. Students know whether teachers are likable but not whether they are knowledgeable, whether lectures are enjoyable but not whether they are reliable. As Charles Frankel once observed, "Teaching is a professional relationship, not a popularity contest. To invite students to participate in the selection or promotion of their teachers . . . exposes the teacher to intimidation." It is vital that a teacher not be frightened of students, for a teacher is expected to question students' pet beliefs, expose their prejudices, and evaluate their work rigorously. To do less is professionally irresponsible.

The diminished jurisdiction of the faculty hinders attempts to fulfill such exacting obligations. How can students be expected to come to grips with their own deficiencies when they automatically receive nothing but A's, B's, and Passes? When a freshman's vote in an academic meeting can cancel out that of a distinguished professor, what lesson is unwittingly taught about the value of acquiring intellectual sophistication? When a student is awarded a BA degree after taking no courses in any but two or three departments, who can appreciate the importance of acquiring a liberal education? If students are applauded for accomplishing little, why should they be expected to strive for more?

During the 1970s faculties were in retreat, fulfilling Mark Rudd's hope that the students would take control of the university. The time has come to reverse that trend. Strong faculties that claim their rightful authority and use it wisely will receive more than the respect of their students; they will earn the gratitude of the nation. An enlightened democracy must commit itself to a deep concern for the education of each citizen. But to be genuine, that concern must manifest itself in a willingness to draw a line between work that is of high quality and work that is not. Without that, education becomes mere sham, and both students and the nation are the losers.

Stephen M. Cahn

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Booming bureaucracy, semi-literate kids.

The Federal Schoolhouse

In January 1980, when the Carter administration was still making plans for the future, Vice President Mondale and domestic adviser Stuart Eizenstat called reporters to the White House to announce new legislation to deal with the youth unemployment problem. After a year-long staff study, Mondale and Eizenstat thought they understood the problem and had an answer. A huge percentage, perhaps half, of the poor and black teenagers and young adults in the nation's major cities were out of school, out of work, and going nowhere. And the source of the problem wasn't the obvious—a lack of jobs. Rather, their chronic unemployment was due to their lack of motivation and their near-illiteracy, according to the Carter aides. These young people couldn't read, write, speak, or think well enough to hold an entry-level job. "The literacy gap we identified was absolutely staggering," Eizenstat said. The discussion at the time was of a "permanent underclass," "another whole generation lost" to a life of crime, drugs, and desperation.

The Carter administration proposed, in its "Youth Act of 1980," a new and expanded two-billion-dollar-a-year program. Half of the money would go to the Education Department and pay for remedial education for teenagers. The other half would expand the Labor Department's existing program to train and employ young people. The legislation passed the House. It was pending in the Senate on November 4, but met the same fate as the Carter administration.

But the question remains, how did we get into this mess? The Great Society, through job training, hous-

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ing subsidies, food aid, and especially education, sought to break the "cycle of poverty." Yet the evidence now suggests that we have an entire population more dependent on government help, more mired in the culture of poverty and failure than ever before. The Carter program was directed at teenagers from "disadvantaged" families. A 16-year-old in 1981 was born in 1965, the year the Great Society took off. Under Lyndon Johnson's direction, Congress first created the Head Start program to give poor children the beginnings of education as well as health care and nutrition starting at age three so that they would arrive at the school door, if not ahead, at least not behind their middle-class peers. Then it was the Elementary and Secondary Education Act which, through its Title I, was set up to pump money into "disadvantaged" schools for "compensatory education." This marked the first breakthrough of federal aid to education. Finally, the Higher Education Act of 1965 set up a program of grants and loans to help poor students go to college.

Now, 16 years later, an enormous percentage of the poor youngsters who were the focus of these programs are said to be virtually illiterate. The Great Society's great hope for the role of education has been punctured. It is a failure that has been both disappointing and puzzling. Since the mid-1960s, standardized tests scores for high school students have been going down steadily. Repeated evaluations of Title I, the Follow-Through program (begun in 1968), and the Bilingual Education Act (also begun in 1968) have found that the children in these special programs learn no more, and often less, than similar children who don't benefit from the extra federal aid.

How could the federal government add so much money to education and come up with nothing to show for it? One reason is now clear. Title I and the bilingual education program, without intending to, create segregation. Typically in a Title I program at an elementary school, the children who aren't learning—the class dummies—are pulled out of their regular class and are taken down the hall to the remedial reading teacher. So too with bilingual education. Hispanic students, who make up 70 percent of the bilingual enrollment, are taken out of regular classes and are taught by "bilingual" teachers. And these "special" teachers are not the best. The Title I special teachers are often "teacher aides," not fully certified teachers. And many of the bilingual teachers can barely function in English. Research studies show that children, especially young ones, learn best under the guidance of one teacher, rather than having a fractured day. The poorest students also learn better when mixed with their middle-class peers. It's no wonder that parents and advocates for handicapped children seek a policy of "mainstreaming" for their children.

A second reason for the failure of federal education aid became evident only in retrospect. The series of narrowly focused "categorical" aid programs, all directed from Washington, have made the education business into a bureaucratic system. The Department of Education lists more than 50 different education grant programs. Each has its own set of requirements, applications, and regulations. And many of the regulations are so precise that they distort the way schools operate. For example, school officials say they separate out Title I children not because they believe it is best for the students, but because it is best for the auditors. The Title I law says schools must spend the federal money for "special" services that "supplement, not

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supplant" local and state education money. Often the only way to prove that is to hire a specialist, a separate teacher who takes the students for a distinct part of the school day. That sort of distortion-by-regulation occurs in scores of federal grant programs, and increasingly in state categorical aid programs, too.

Michael Kirst, a Stanford University professor of education and president of the California State Board of Education, recently analyzed the staffing patterns in California's public schools. Over the past decade, school enrollment in California dropped nine percent. The number of regular teachers went up by four percent and the number of principals went up by one percent. At the same time, the number of "central office administrators"—school district bureaucrats—rose by 13 percent, the number of "pupil service personnel" went up by 27 percent, the number of teacher aides up by 43 percent, the number of full-time counselors by 30 percent, and the number of psychologists up by 83 percent. The same study also concluded that each dollar of federal aid cost nine times as much to administer as a dollar voted by the local school board.

The rigid and seemingly needlessly detailed requirements in federal law were written quite deliberately. Federal education aid grew out of the civil rights movement, and the civil rights groups that pushed the

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legislation, along with their Democratic sponsors on Capitol Hill, simply didn't trust state or local school officials. As former representative Albert Quie, then ranking Republican on the House Education and Labor Committee and now governor of Minnesota, used to say, "We write these laws as if we are only dealing with Mississippi."

THE HANDICAPPED education law, passed in 1975, is clearly the most extreme in its requirements. It says that each handicapped child must have an "individualized education program" drawn up and reviewed in twice-yearly meetings. The meetings must be attended by the school principal, the child's regular teacher, any special teachers, a school psychologist or counselor, and the parents. If they choose, the parents may bring along an "advocate" such as a lawyer. This provision was written by a House subcommittee to give parents a way to fight the system. But the meetings, like all meetings set up by lawyers and bureaucrats, are long on procedure and short on substance. A junior high school principal recently told me he spends at least one-third of his time working around the few handicapped students in his school. Most of his time is spent in "IEP meetings." Another Stanford education professor, Myron Atkins, has studied how the handicapped education law has worked in the schools and concluded, in a line that could apply to all federal aid, that this "well-intentioned program" has many "side effects that are not beneficial."

"Teachers and others spend enormous amounts of time writing plans, conducting conferences, and preparing reports," he said. "Many special education [handicapped] teachers and administrators have come to see themselves as compliance officers rather than as providers of education services." He concluded, "It is a real possibility that direct service to handicapped children has actually been reduced," despite a billion dollars in extra federal aid.

But the education picture is not all bleak. It is a time for hope when social scientists are stating what principals and teachers have been saying for a decade—federal aid has tied them in paper knots. The education business has been hurt by its adherence to several social science myths. One is that all schools are basically the same. Another is that the quality of the school doesn't make much difference in the lives of students. Sociologists ran their "data" through a computer, "aggregated" it by income groups, and found, sure enough, that poor students on the average don't fare as well in school as richer kids. If you are poor and come from a "disadvantaged" neighborhood you will be in a lousy school and not learn much. That in essence was the message of much of the social science research in the 1960s and early 1970s.

Ronald Edmonds, a Harvard University education professor who is black, bristled at this sort of research—first because it was wrong, and second because it offered a fine excuse for accepting miserable schools in poor neighborhoods. Edmonds found in his research that there are "effective schools" in poor neighborhoods, schools that had a real impact on their students. Researchers working in the London schools came to basically the same conclusions. Edmonds and others found that the effective schools have certain characteristics that distinguish them from the ineffective schools. The most important factor is the principal. A good one, Edmonds found, is an "instructional leader." He or she cares first about the academic program, not the football team, the boiler room, or going to "workshops." This sort of principal is out in the school, talking to students, supporting and monitoring teachers. Ineffective principals are bureaucrats who sit in their offices filling out forms and going to meetings.

The principals and teachers in the effective schools had "high expectations" for their students. Good teachers are true believers. They look at the potential in a class and take it as their responsibility to make sure the students learn. Poor teachers believe—and they will be blunt in telling you—that they got stuck with a classful of losers.

Effective schools also tend to be "orderly without being rigid." They are focused on the academic basics like reading and writing, not on having students discuss whether they "identify with a Volkswagen or a Cadillac and why." And the progress of students is "frequently monitored," Edmonds found. The nation's largest teachers' union, the National Education Association, has been nearly obsessed with the idea of abolishing standardized tests of any form. The less evaluation, the better, the NEA says. But better for whom?

TWO YEARS AGO, New York City school chancellor Frank Macchiarola asked Edmonds, as the school system's deputy chancellor for instruction, to put his ideas to work. Edmonds has just returned to Harvard after putting into effect a regime that emphasized learning and did away with "social promotions." Last month, the New York City schools reported their city-wide test scores had gone up six percent in the last year, believed to be the largest rise of any school system in the nation.

So what does all this mean for federal aid to education? It means that we failed, but we know where we went wrong. The federal government has sought to do too much in education. This has resulted in a fractured, faddish school curriculum. Each year, there seems to be a new type of education to be incorporated into the curriculum: career education, environmental education, metric education, driver's education, alcohol and drug abuse education, energy education, and so on. Local school systems and state departments of education have reacted like puppets, pulled this way and that by the possibility of a few million dollars in grant money. As a result, the presumed basics—like math and science—have been ignored to an amazing degree. Half the high school graduates in the United

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States last year had not taken a single math or science course in their junior and senior years.

The federal government has also been far too rigid in its regulations. Because Congress felt it couldn't trust educators, it created regulations to undercut the authority of local school boards, school superintendents, principals, and teachers. The new authority resides in the hands of special-interest groups, organized around the categorical programs, and their lobbies in Washington and in the state capitals.

In the final analysis good schools are not all that different from good restaurants, another sort of establishment that can do quite nicely in not-so-nice neighborhoods. It takes a leader with energy, enthusiasm, and the unshakable conviction that he or she will succeed. That kind of person usually attracts the same kind of individuals as assistants and teachers. Yet federal education aid has instead created a new class of bureaucrats, paper pushers, compliance officers, grant writers and lobbyists. And as in any bureaucratic system, the emphasis is on process, not results.

The Reagan administration is now trying to revamp federal education aid into two block grants—one to the states and one to school districts. Most education lobbyists in Washington are suspicious of the whole idea, first because it is linked to a 25 percent budget cut and second because it looks like general aid to education. They should remain suspicious if it proves that Reagan means both to cut aid and to spread what's left among all schools, rich and poor. But if Reagan's plan is what education secretary Terrel Bell says it is, it could be a step in the right direction. Australia, seeing America's experience with Title I, created its own "disadvantaged schools program," but without all the strings. It sends money to poor schools and lets them do with it as they will. Congress should combine the hundreds of small programs into a few block grants and simplify the major programs like Title I and handicapped education. Title I is probably too broad as well, since 80 percent of the nation's elementary schools get the money. Less than 20 percent of junior and high schools do. The really dismal performances are being turned in by the junior and senior highs, many of which are too big and out of control. More of the federal education aid should be aimed at this level.

But above all, the program, however it is structured, needs to emphasize results, not just paper compliance. If students aren't learning more, it's not worth spending the money. Principals must be trusted to do their job, but should be held accountable for doing it well. Local school boards should give a principal two or three years to improve a poor school. If he or she can't do better with the extra money and the extra help, they should find a principal who can.

Despite the dismal record so far, Lyndon Johnson at least chose the right education problem for the federal government—the education of the poorest children. Whether the goal is phrased to suit conservative Republicans ("a productive citizenry") or liberal Democrats ("a just society"), quality education for all children is the way to get there. What Washington can do for education is limited, but still important. It can give poor schools the extra money to upgrade themselves. But in the final analysis good principals and good teachers—not money alone, not special learning "models," and not "innovations"—make for quality education. It took the federal government billions of dollars to learn this lesson. It's one worth putting to use.

David G. Savage

David G. Savage is associate editor of the weekly *Education U.S.A.*

Why Johnny can't read, write, add, or think.

The Schools We Deserve

by Diane Ravitch

"To the casual observer, American education is a confusing and not altogether edifying spectacle. It is productive of endless fads and panaceas; it is pretentiously scientific and at the same time pathetically conventional; it is scornful of the past, yet painfully inarticulate when it speaks of the future." This strikingly contemporary observation was made by the educational philosopher Boyd Bode in *The New Republic* in 1930. Since then, American schools have lurched from crisis to crisis and their internal confusion and aimlessness remains intact.

During the past half-century, the schools have been persistently battered by controversy and crisis, much

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of it growing out of efforts to redirect the purposes of the schools. In the 1930s, heated pedagogical battles between progressive educators and traditionalists were decided when the progressives secured dominance in the nation's teachers' colleges and professional educators' associations. In the postwar 1940s, the schools were handicapped by critical shortages of teachers and buildings, low teacher salaries, and the advent of the baby boom generation. In the early 1950s, the schools were attacked by a variety of critics—from those who objected to the anti-intellectualism of the latest progressive fad, known as "life adjustment education," to the reactionary vigilantes who wanted to cleanse the schools of "subversive" teachers and textbooks. The orbiting of Sputnik in 1957 marked a new crisis, when Americans discovered the costs of neglecting science, mathematics, and foreign languages in the secondary schools. Meanwhile, the prolonged struggle against racial inequality, both before and after the *Brown* decision, provided a recurrent source of strife. And then, in the mid-1960s, schools were again under fire, this time because of student protests and reformers who advocated such innovations as open classrooms, schools-without-walls, experiential learning, deschooling, and other arrangements whose common denominator was greater student choice and diminished adult authority.

The vast and variegated educational system that we have today, with all its virtues and flaws, is largely the product of policies shaped by responses to these events. In assessing the rising tide of criticism of the past five years, it is important to recall that the schools have tried to do, and for the most part have done successfully, what was demanded of them. Every nation gets the schools that it deserves, and we have today a system that reflects our own conflicts about the relative importance of different social and educational values.

FOR THE PAST generation no goal has been more important to educational policy-makers than expanding access to educational opportunity for all youth. Whether one looks at high school graduation rates or college enrollment, it is clear that remarkable progress has been made. At mid-century, about 50 percent graduated from high school; the figure today is 85 percent. From 1968 to 1978, black enrollment grew from 6.4 percent to more than 10 percent of all college students, and the proportion of females increased from 39 percent to 48 percent. For the first time in our history, access to higher education is universal. A recent study by the College Board found that one-third of post-secondary institutions are "open-door," accepting all applicants regardless of their academic credentials; more than half are "selective," accepting only those who meet their qualifications, but nonetheless accepting most or all of those who apply for admission; and just eight percent are "competitive," accepting only a portion of qualified applicants. As college enrollments shrink in the years ahead, the number of competitive institutions will drop.

Yet having pursued the goal of increased participation so single-mindedly and successfully, educators are greeted not with laurels but with brickbats. While the schools were devising ways to retain students by meeting demands for "relevance," the pendulum began to swing, and a new critique of the schools emerged, which assumed mass education as a given but focused on the issue of quality. If there was a single event that precipitated the new public mood, it was the revelation in 1975 that scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test for college entry had slipped steadily for 10 years. Other pieces of what seemed to be a jigsaw puzzle began to fall into place. At opposite ends of the country, angry parents sued the local school district for granting a high school diploma to their functionally illiterate children (both lost). The National Assessment of Educational Progress released a survey which showed that eight percent of 17-year-old whites were functionally illiterate, as well as a shocking 42 percent of 17-year-old blacks (since 75 percent of black students graduate from high schools, the diploma apparently had become merely a certificate of attendance for a substantial minority). There was a growing recognition that automatic promotion from grade to grade, regardless of attainment, had contributed to masking learning deficiencies and that the high school diploma no longer represented any particular level of proficiency. One response to the accumulation of bad news was the adoption of state-mandated minimum competency tests, which spread from one state (Arizona) in 1976 to 38 states in 1980, a spontaneous national movement without a spokesman or a national organization to promote it.

AN EXTRAORDINARY thing has happened to achievement levels since the mid-1960s. SAT scores, which had been a consistent measure of verbal and mathematical skills, have dropped dramatically. Median verbal scores have fallen from a high of 478 in 1963 to a new low of 424 in 1980; in the same period, mathematical scores fell from 502 to 466. On both tests girls' scores dropped more sharply than those of boys. The first reaction to the score drops was to attribute them to the fact that large numbers of minorities, females, and low-income students joined the college-bound pool during this time of expansion. But in fact the composition of the test-takers has been fairly stable since 1970, and the score drops have been even more extensive since then. It is more telling that the number and proportion of high-scoring students have fallen precipitously; the number of seniors who scored over 650 fell from 53,800 (5.3 percent) in 1972 to 29,000 in 1980 (2.9 percent). The shrinkage of the top-scorers has proceeded steadily since the mid-1960s, and obviously is unrelated to the overall composition of the test-taking group.

When the College Board's blue-ribbon panel to investigate the causes of the score decline released its

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findings in 1977, it rounded up the usual suspects: the decline of the family; working mothers; television; the trauma of a decade of Vietnam, civil disorders, and Watergate; drugs; and sex-role stereotyping. When it came to describing the responsibility of schools for the score declines, the panel noted that "There have unquestionably been changes over the past 10 to 15 years in the standards to which students at all levels of education are held. Absenteeism formerly considered intolerable is now condoned. An 'A' or 'B' means a good deal less than it used to. Promotion from one grade to another has become almost automatic. Homework has apparently been cut about in half." It pointedly concluded, too, that "less thoughtful and critical reading is now being demanded and done," and "careful writing has apparently about gone out of style." After much sociological wandering, the panel came to a simple conclusion: the retreat from thoughtful reading and careful writing may explain a good deal about declining verbal skills and it suggests changes that are within the reach of the school.

Vint Lawrence

THE UNUSUAL attention paid to the SAT provoked claims that there was something peculiar about the test itself and that it was somehow out of phase with the times. Unfortunately for this thesis, the SAT declines were reflected in other standardized tests. Researchers Annegret Harnischfeger and David E. Wiley analyzed other major tests, including the American College Test (which many colleges use instead of the SAT), the Iowa testing program (used statewide in Iowa and elsewhere), and the Minnesota Scholastic Aptitude Test (administered to more than 90 percent of Minnesota high school juniors). They found strikingly consistent patterns of decline: rising achievement levels until the mid-1960s, then a steady decline which accelerates as students reach higher grades and which is particularly pronounced in verbal areas. The only exception to the overall downward trend was in the subject-matter achievement tests of the SAT and the ACT science test. Rather than being contradictory, this phenomenon suggested a bifurcation between the top students and everyone else, with the best students doing exceptionally well and the others falling further behind.

Although Harnischfeger and Wiley were careful to insist that the score declines had many causes, they nonetheless argued that substantial enrollment declines in traditional subjects "parallel closely the test score decline patterns." They reported that fewer students were taking regular English, American history, math, and science courses, although the advanced college-preparatory courses did not experience a comparable dropoff in enrollment. Once again, the best students were taking the courses they needed, while everyone else was—doing what? Not enrolling in vocational or business courses, which also showed declines. Apparently the schools offered fewer instructional programs and more work-study options.

Last year the Gannett newspapers sent an investigative team into two dozen schools. Like Harnischfeger and Wiley, they discovered pervasive dilution of the secondary school curriculum. They described schools in which high school credit was offered for such courses as astrology, marriage simulation, cheerleading, student government, child care, and mass media. The average public school, they observed, had three hours each day of instructional time, compared to more than four hours in the average nonpublic school. In one junior high school they visited, the typical student spent two hours and 12 minutes in an academic class.

Concern about enrollment trends in science, mathematics, and foreign languages has provoked some scathing commentaries on the state of curricular requirements. The President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies complained in 1979 that "Americans' incompetence in foreign languages is nothing short of scandalous, and it is becoming worse." The commission pointed out that "only 15 percent of American high school students now study a foreign language—down from 24 percent in 1965. The decline continues." It also noted with alarm that only one out of 20 high school students studies a foreign language beyond the second year, while four years' study is considered necessary for competence. Equally shocking is the tiny number of Americans in high school or college who learn the languages of such major powers as Russia, China, or Japan. In fact, the number of Russian language students in American secondary schools dropped sharply, from 27,000 in 1965 to 11,000 in 1976.

Last fall a report sponsored by the National Science Foundation and the Department of Education warned of "a current trend toward virtual scientific and technological illiteracy. . . ." America's scientists continue

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to be internationally preeminent in research and publication, but the American people are increasingly ignorant about science and technology. Again the theme of bifurcation appears: "Those who are the best seem to be learning about as much as they ever did, while the majority of students learn less and less." Will important national decisions be made by a scientific elite, or will there be a broad enough diffusion of scientific knowledge for citizens to understand vital, science-related issues?

AND THERE HAVE been persistent complaints about students' writing ability. Few high school students have ever had systematic writing instruction of the sort that involves thinking through a topic, preparing multiple drafts, receiving written and oral comments from the teacher, and revising papers after the teacher returns them. Recognizing that a national problem exists, many colleges have introduced remedial writing classes. People often mistakenly assume that such classes are a response to rising numbers of minority students. At one major state university, more than half the freshman class this year is enrolled in a remedial writing course. This fall Bard College in New York will try a different approach. All incoming Bard freshmen will have to participate in an intensive three-week "Workshop in Language and Thinking" before regular classes begin. For six days a week, eight hours a day, students will learn how to read, write, and organize ideas. They will prepare a written assignment each day, which will be returned with a critique the following day. The Bard workshop is more concentrated and individualized than most such courses, and avoids taking time away from regular college studies, permitting the student to improve his or her skills before beginning first-semester courses.

Well, then, what's going on here? How is it that some students finish high school with few skills and less knowledge, that others arrive at college underprepared for college-level work, while a small minority of the same graduating class has been remarkably well educated in their special fields of interest? This diverse range of outcomes actually is consistent with the changes that have been introduced in schools, especially public schools, during the past 15 years or so. In response to student demands for greater flexibility, colleges began to lower their entrance requirements in the mid-1960s, and high schools followed their lead by abolishing certain course requirements. (After all, goes the argument, if you don't need a foreign language to get into college, why should high schools require you to take one?) As requirements fell, the notion of a common curriculum was undermined. To maintain student interest, courses in traditional subjects were fragmented into electives and mini-courses, particularly in the "soft," humanistic areas like English and history, and requirements in the "hard" subjects like mathematics, science, and foreign language were eased or eliminated. In a time of rapidly proliferating electives, every felt need produced pressure for a new course, for values education, moral education, death education, consumer education (to name but a few), in addition to such old standbys as career education, sex education, drug education, and driver education. Inasmuch as the curriculum is a zero-sum game, with only a certain number of hours each day, every course added to a student's schedule displaces some other course. The proliferation of new courses and the easing of requirements meant that students could substitute a fun course like "mass media" for a demanding course in literature, and many evidently did.

With the authority of the common curriculum under challenge, it became difficult for educators to justify, or even to remember how to justify, any given course content. Why should students read Melville or e. e. cummings or Milton? Why did they need to know anything about the Greeks or Romans? Why learn a foreign language? If they weren't going to become scientists, why should they be compelled to study science? Wouldn't they be just as happy, happier even, if they never studied chemistry or physics or algebra or geometry? In many high schools the requirements and the common curriculum collapsed like eggshells. This meant that, after meeting minimal state-imposed requirements, students could practically design their own program. The best students, those with the highest motivation and purpose, continued to take advanced college-preparatory courses; the average and below-average students, who might have learned more if the expectations of the school had been clear and consistent, found that they could easily navigate around courses that appeared too challenging.

UNCERTAINTY about what students should study reflected uncertainty about why they should study, and this self-doubt undermined the teachers' sense of purpose and authority. This confusion, quite understandable in a time of student unrest and societal permissiveness, made it increasingly difficult for teachers to impose demands on students, which in turn led to lower teacher expectations. Truancy began to rise, as did discipline problems, like drug use during the school day. Homework and essays, once staples of schooling, fell into disfavor. Students didn't like to do the "extra" work, and teachers were relieved of reading and grading the 100 or more papers that would be turned in by their different classes. Part of a major new study by James Coleman, comparing public and private schools, documents how little time most public high school students spend on homework. Three out of four students do one hour or less each school night, while one of four does less than one hour each week. Not surprisingly, the students with the least homework watch the most television.

Homework may seem insignificant as an educational issue, but it does matter. Homework provides the necessary time for thoughtful writing and serious reading, time that is rarely available during school

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hours. Can the large majority who spend an hour or less each day on homework have time to read a novel or to write a short story? It seems not only unlikely but impossible. Homework matters, too, because of the importance of what is called "time-on-task." The phrase is educationese for the common-sense proposition that educational performance is directly related to the amount of time spent learning. Researchers have observed that a large part of the school day is consumed by changing of classes, interruptions, announcements, and disciplinary problems, and that a large part of the time even in good classrooms is not instructional time. Anything that extends the amount of time spent learning is likely to improve student performance. This does not suggest any particular method of teaching, since students can be fully engaged in individual or small group projects, but it does suggest the value of homework in stretching out the amount of learning time available to the student. It also explains why absenteeism, class-cutting, and disruptive behavior in the classroom robs students of precious learning time.

THE DILEMMA of American education has persisted since the founding of public schools in the early 19th century. What kind of schooling is most appropriate for a democratic society? American educators championed a common school education, in the belief that it would promote equality, fraternity, and social progress. Common schools usually meant what we now consider elementary education and, even today, no one doubts that the curriculum for young children should be more or less the same for all. The problem arises as children become adolescents, and their interests, talents, and abilities begin to diverge. It would be unrealistic and unsound to advocate that all young people should study the same things at the same time, in lockstep fashion, since the quick learners will find the pace too tedious and the slow learners will find it too fast. The solution to the problem of individual differences has been to establish different programs, depending on students' ability. This has taken various forms, but two especially. The first is tracking, which is determined by the students' apparent educational or occupational destinies, such as college-preparatory, vocational, and general. Because of its antidemocratic implications, tracking has been in disfavor. The second approach has been ability-grouping—dividing children into classes or learning groups based on ability, while having everyone learn the same subject-matter. Ability-grouping is still used in many schools, but in some, such as in Washington, DC, it was banned by the courts as racially discriminatory. (The acting superintendent of the DC schools recently complained that the black middle class pulled their children out of the District's public schools when ability-grouping was discontinued.) So the schools today try variants on these approaches, but find it particularly tempting to move toward lowering requirements and expanding electives. That way, the school doesn't have to have any policy of separating students by ability, but can rely on the students to do the sorting themselves.

But is it democratic for schools to permit students to decide whether they should or should not learn those things that every informed citizen should know? It is not clear why educators, more than any other profession, should become ensnared to the point of confusion by the word "democratic." Under that mantle, responsible authority has been attacked as authoritarianism, and students have been allowed to choose between an education of value and something decidedly less. Perhaps the message that schools send, when they suggest that there is no core of vital knowledge and skills, is that students can elect not only what to study but whether to come to school.

Whenever it is suggested that the schools can strive for a higher level of universal education, the refrain is quickly heard that some students don't have the brains or the inclination to study such things as history, literature, science, mathematics, foreign languages, and the arts. The challenge that has not been met is to present the same subject matter through a variety of teaching techniques and to make it immediate and valuable to all. This may be an impossible dream, but it is a dream worth pursuing. According to reports about Japan and France, universal quality education is not beyond imagination. In *Japan as Number One*, Ezra Vogel writes of a national education system that has produced a highly literate public, knowledgeable about international affairs and about the intricacies of scientific issues like nuclear power and pollution. And Paul Gagnon, a French historian at the University of Massachusetts, has written about widespread popular support in France for "the right to culture." The technological society, Gagnon notes, with its threat of alienation and boredom and its promise of extended leisure time, makes indispensable to everyone "a personal culture, a furnished mind, practiced senses, skilled hands." All French adolescents, not just the select few, receive an education by the age of 15 or 16 that is the equivalent of what an American student covers by the end of the sophomore year in college.

DESPITE our dissatisfaction, we will not soon transform our educational system. It is not that it can't be done. The problem is that we lack consensus about whether there should be a common curriculum, whether there are knowledge and skills that everyone should have. If we believed that it was important to have a highly literate public, to have a public capable of understanding history and politics and economics, to have citizens who are knowledgeable about science and technology, to have a society in which the powers of verbal communication are developed systematically and intentionally, then we would know what we wanted of our schools. Until we do, we get the schools we deserve, which accurately reflect our own confusion about the value of education.

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Books and the Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on films

Images, Fine and Fuzzy

One of my favorite Jewish jokes is about the Jew who is shipwrecked, alone, on a remote island. Ten years later a ship happens to pass, and the captain comes ashore in a launch to take off the castaway. The captain sees that, during his stay, the Jew has built a house and two synagogues. "But," says the bewildered captain, "why two synagogues?" The Jew points to one of them and says sternly, "To that one I *don't* go."

The qualities implicit in that joke, along with many others, are fixed in a 90-minute documentary called *Image Before My Eyes* which deals with Jewish life in Poland up to 1939. (The film ends with the German invasion.) Its purpose is to show *shtetl* life, the life of a Polish-Jewish town, but also to show much more. The *shtetl* was important, and so was a great deal more—urban Jewish life, in Warsaw and Lodz and Vilna and elsewhere, from the proletarian to the affluent; vital Jewish institutions like the theater and literary and intellectual circles; the range of hotly supported parties organized on religious lines or on Zionist issues or on political radicalist issues; special Jewish schools for the handicapped, special Jewish sanitoria for the tubercular; farm life at levels from the peasant to the plump; and, in fact, synagogues themselves, from the predictably modest to grand wooden structures to the great synagogue of Warsaw. Poland was not analagous to a remote island, but the Jews who found themselves there built and stratified and discussed and argued and strove and prospered and suffered. Set down in a land and given something of a chance, they created an intricate society.

Image Before My Eyes is frequently moving and always engrossing. It was produced by the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, directed and edited by Josh Waletsky, written by Jerome Badanes, and was based on a YIVO exhibit and a book (same title as the film) by Dr. Lucjan Dobrszycki and Dr. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett. The result is far from a vulgar tear-jerker: it's a picture that evokes hush, warmth, chuckle, and awe. But, inevitably, because of the events that lie between then and now, a cold hand is always hovering near one's heart.

Stills and newsreel footage and even some early "home" movies—taken by people who had emigrated to America and returned to see relatives—make up most of the well-arranged texture. Often Waletsky uses the familiar but always stabbing device of quick-fade from an old photograph of a young person to film of that person today, and continues with an interview of the survivor. One particularly vivid sequence begins with pleasant "primitive" recollective drawings of life on a substantial Jewish farm, then cuts to the face today of the woman who made those drawings supplementing her recollections with anecdote. Some of the old photos contain people whose names became known: one group of endearingly serious young folk includes the dramatist Peretz Hirschbein and the novelist I. J. Singer.

The wide scope of Jewish life in Poland before World War II is not news but is still surprising: the idea that there was nothing but prejudice and persecution is as false as the idea that there was no prejudice and persecution. I've met contemporary Polish Jews, visiting the US, who are fiercely patriotic; Artur Rubinstein showed in a documentary about himself a few years ago that he feels very Jewish and very Polish. On the other hand, we're all aware of the other end of the spectrum, the vile abuses. *Image Before My Eyes* is careful to show subtle gradations in between: the former Warsaw Jew, now an American, who tells of his embarrassment by the bearded, traditionally dressed Jews not because he tried to hide his identity but because he didn't want to wear the uniform of a stranger. Another former Warsaw Jew tells us how he spoke better Polish than most Poles, who respected him because of his educated speech until they learned that he was Jewish. (The language matter is complex: at least five are entailed, Hebrew, Yiddish, Polish, and—because of the partitioning of Poland—Russian and German.) The film doesn't leave us yearning to have been Jews in prewar Poland, but it does make vivid how various and often fertile Polish-Jewish lives were.

The most ironic moment is the newsreel shot of gentile Polish students at the university in Vilna in the mid-1930s who had been inspired by Hitler to put up banners urging that Jews be banned from their university. Polish neo-Nazis, a few years before September 1939.

The great historian G. M. Young wrote: " . . . The real, central theme of History is not what happened, but what people felt about it when it was happening: in Philip Sidney's phrase, 'the affects, the whisperings, the motions of the people'. . . ." *Image Before My Eyes* is full of those affects and whisperings and motions.

Please Note: This film was funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, which is about to suffer grievously under the Reagan budget.

Films Worth Seeing

Breaker Morant. Australian film about Boer War court-martial. Familiar ironies about wartime justice, but crisply acted, directed, and photographed.

Kagemusha. Kurosawa's epic about war in 16th-century Japan. Not his best, still easily magnificent.

Oblomov. Goncharov's great novel is fairly well served in this Soviet picture. Emphases are altered, but the central state is there.

Raging Bull. Robert De Niro as a crazed, sane fighter in a chunk of urban bile-and-anger well directed by Martin Scorsese.

SK

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The Vilna Troupe, a Yiddish theater company. Photo from *Image Before My Eyes.*

Further Note: I'm writing at a moment of tremendous gravity for Poland, with no knowledge of what the situation there will be by the time this reaches print. A week or so ago, along with a report of the immensely brave protests by Polish workers against police and other brutalities, I read a story of a smaller "counter" demonstration in Warsaw calling for support of the government and blaming current unrest on Jewish agitators. It seemed obvious that this second demonstration was a "provocation" instituted by government officials, possibly under Soviet orders. Apparently it failed, but it was intended to ignite feelings that at least some people believe are always latent in Poles. A horrible point to make at this moment of supreme Polish courage, but I thought of it while watching Waletzky's documentary. "History," said Stephen Dedalus, unlike G. M. Young, "is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake." Aren't we all.

John Guare, author of the screenplay of *Atlantic City*, is one of the chief embroiderers among current American playwrights. He has gifts of language and wit and fantasy, too clear to be dismissible; and he tats and crochets little doilies and antimacassars that do not quite —or nearly—serve the purposes they're intended for. He hasn't yet written a satisfactory play, and he's been at it for almost 20 years. (He also wrote the screenplay for Milos Forman's *Taking Off*, alas.) Guare is like a mod J. M. Barrie looking for chances to be whimsical and curlicued but without Barrie's mastery of form. And form, in Barrie's command and Guare's lack of it, doesn't mean following a rule book (though Barrie sometimes did) but the ability to envision clearly and fulfill completely.

Guare's screenplay for *Atlantic City* is more mod Barrie, this time without intrinsic form but burdened with orders (I'd bet) from film bosses to *get* some form and damned well knit the thing together. Also, this time it's heavily seasoned with mod Damon Runyon. If there were such a thing as an Atlantic City genre—the only antecedent I can think of is *The King of Marvin Gardens*—it might be described as life among the allegedly charming low-lifes, spiced with nuttiness and crime. Guare's story concerns: an aging gambler and numbers runner, Burt Lancaster; a bed-ridden, or bed-riding, widow, who came here, years before, for a minor beauty contest, married a gangster who was murdered, and now lives in her (cornily) corny apartment, Kate Reid; a deserted young wife working at an oyster bar and studying to be a blackjack dealer, Susan Sarandon; her teacher who wants to take her to France and is toning her up, Michel Piccoli (who gives her a tape of "Casta Diva" only a few weeks after *Oblomov* which also uses the aria); Sarandon's errant sister, a hippie who has just returned very pregnant by, and with, Sarandon's husband; that husband who wants to peddle in A.C. some cocaine that he stole from a drug ring in Philadelphia.

Put them all together, and you can't. Put them together, that is. Neither could Guare, though he keeps pushing them against one another. Somewhere buried in the mechanics is an idea about an old no-good (Lancaster) making the supreme sacrifice to help a young woman (Sarandon) Get Away. Sarandon is the only one in the cast worth mention: she has a combination of 19th-century beauty and contemporary tacit humor and feeling that makes me hope she'll get a good script some day.

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But she and all the others here are only capital-C Characters, collections of characteristics and oddities, presumably colorful, unrelated to life as we know it or want to know it.

The film was directed by the Frenchman Louis Malle, fresh from the disaster of *Pretty Baby*, in which Sarandon was also wasted. Since the picture takes place by the sea, I won't resist the temptation to say that it suffers from Malle de mer. Every moment in it that might have some feeling or drama is crayoned heavily by this vacuously arty director.

Radical Chic

Naming Names
by Victor Navasky

(Viking Press; $15.95)

The McCarthy era was not one of the most glorious episodes in American history. Neither the left nor the right distinguished itself politically or won any moral victories. Yet it continues to haunt the liberal—and radical—imagination. Even now, three decades later, the left is still writing about it, trying to squeeze the last ounce of political meaning out of the events of the 1950s.

The latest effort to draw the proper lessons from McCarthyism, presumably to put us on our guard against a possible repetition, is Victor Navasky's *Naming Names*. It is ostensibly a study of the Hollywood Ten and other figures in the movie colony accused of being Communists, and of the people who identified them before the House Un-American Activities Committee. But, as the title indicates, its real subject is the psychology and motives of those Navasky refers to as "informers," though he does talk a good deal about the characters and politics of the Communists and fellow travelers in the movie industry.

Navasky is a shrewd and competent radical journalist, and he tries to recreate the drama of conscience and confrontation—with its soul-searching as well as its political and practical calculation—of both the Communists and those who named them. The book is built on enormous and seemingly meticulous research (sometimes, in fact, an overload of detail and repetition). Navasky also gives the appearance of being fair: he supplies long interviews and quotations from figures on both sides, and some of the opposing arguments. But he actually leans constantly to one side, to the Hollywood Ten, whom he considers to be honest and idealistic—the victims, as he sees it, of the political wars of the 1950s. Even his division of the protagonists into "resisters" and "informers" is loaded.

Navasky describes his book as "less a history than a moral detective story." Its primary purpose is to find out why "decent people betrayed their fellows," and also to suggest lessons for today. However, Navasky's investigation turns out to be more political than moral, because, as he admits, what people tell about their own and others' affiliations is morally ambiguous. And the distinction he draws between "resisters" and "informers" is essentially political. It is based on his own view of Soviet communism, of American democracy, of the meaning of being a member of the Communist party, and of the politics of those who broke with it. If *Naming Names* is a detective story—moral or political—it is the kind of whodunit in which we know from the start who is guilty and who is innocent.

It is difficult to summarize Navasky's argument. It merges legal, moral, political, and practical considerations. It complicates simple issues. It simplifies complex ones. And a certain amount of confusion arises because Navasky associates—not explicitly, but by innuendo—the odium attached to HUAC with the ex-Communists who testified before it as well. Essentially Navasky's thesis is that the Hollywood Communists, despite their false politics, were heroically defending American democracy and upholding the Constitution, while the former Communists, whose break with the party may have been politically justified, betrayed their friends, their moral principles, and the political imperative not to cooperate in any way with such evil institutions as HUAC. Navasky even approvingly quotes E. M. Forster's famous remark that betraying one's country is preferable to betraying a friend.

The heroes in this saga of loyalty and betrayal were, of course, such well-known members of the Hollywood Ten as John Howard Lawson, Lester Cole, Edward Dmytryk, Dalton Trumbo, Albert Maltz, Ring Lardner Jr., as well as a number of lesser-known Communists and ex-Communists who refused to name other members of the Communist party. The heroes also included such prominent figures as Zero Mostel, Dashiell Hammett, and Lillian Hellman, who defied HUAC and other federal agencies. Also among the heroic victims Navasky cites were those accused of perjury and espionage, like Alger Hiss and the Rosenbergs, whose guilt Navasky regards as questionable. There were many villains, including such celebrities as Budd Schulberg, Elia Kazan, Sterling Hayden, Abe Burroughs, Lionel Stander, Lee J. Cobb, Larry Parks, Lloyd Bridges, Clifford Odets, and James Wechsler, the veteran journalist and columnist. Then there were those Navasky calls the "professional informers," who went through no struggle of conscience, and who are lumped by association with the unwilling witnesses. Finally, there are the liberal anti-Stalinists; according to Navasky, by opposing communism they helped create—or did not sufficiently resist—the political tendencies that made possible the persecution of the Communists. In this category Navasky includes the American Committee for Cultural Freedom, which he accuses of being funded by the CIA because of its association with the Congress for Cultural Freedom. He thus defames the many distinguished liberals who belonged to it and represented a wide range of opinion. Also in the camp of the villains was the American Jewish Committee, which naturally tried to counter the notion fostered by reactionaries that Jews are Communists. A formidable army of "betrayers."

In narrowing the issue of communism and anti-communism to the question of naming names, Navasky has bypassed the debate, usually conducted in bad faith, over whether those named as Communists were really Communists or just innocent liberals (except when he talks about Hiss and the Rosenbergs). He even praises HUAC for doing its homework and going after only bona-fide Communists and fellow travelers. By oversimplifying the prob-

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lem, however, Navasky takes it out of its complex political context, and reduces the matter to the dilemma of whether to snitch or not to snitch. Thus his formal arguments have to do with informing, which is condemned largely on moral grounds. And the moral appeal of Navasky's often circuitous reasoning amounts to little more than the Boy Scout code of not telling on your friends, which, I suppose, is good enough for many situations—particularly those that are personal and involve people with shared ideals and a common sense of community. But Navasky admits that where fascists or criminals are involved informing is good, not evil. Therefore his moral stricture can be justified only by the political premises on which he bases his arguments. Essentially, Navasky's position is that the Hollywood Communists should have been protected because their politics were not beyond the pale. It is interesting to recall that in Dostoevsky's great political novel, *The Possessed*, some of the revolutionaries inform or threaten to inform on one another. But informing was not more heinous than their lying or their justification of terrorism. For Dostoevsky, the revolutionaries' motives were not sacrosanct.

AS FOR Navasky's politics, he does acknowledge that the Soviet Union is a totalitarian country and that dissident writers are persecuted, though he does not go too far in pursuing his criticism of the Soviet regime or the Communist parties. Nevertheless, his fundamental thesis is served by making a distinction between communism and fascism, a distinction, he claims, that social critics like Hannah Arendt and the anti-communist liberals generally blurred. Russia, Navasky says, unlike Nazi Germany, had a humanistic goal. And those who joined the Communist party, like the Hollywood Ten, had idealistic motives. Their sin was their innocence. They knew nothing of espionage, or of Soviet terror, and presumably nothing of Soviet repression of the satellite countries. In my experience, this was mostly not true, and when it was, such innocence came from a willed ignorance. Navasky himself quotes an exchange between Schulberg and Lillian Hellman. Schulberg said that Babel and other Russian writers had been killed, and Hellman replied "prove it."

However, whether or not the Communists were innocents—and to insist on their intellectual innocence is to accuse them of stupidity—Navasky sidesteps the question of their responsibility. Joining the Communist party is not like joining the League of Women Voters. How can you fail to know that the Communist party is a totalitarian organization, taking its doctrines from Marx and Lenin and its orders from Moscow, and that it stands not for justice but ultimately for a communist world, and immediately for the interests of the Soviet Union? In any event, the Hollywood Communists should have been expected to accept the consequences of joining a revolutionary party, even if one of the consequences was the loss of their jobs. Despite one's opposition to terrorists, one must at least respect their not insisting on having jobs in the system they are undermining. Academic tenure or a safe job in Hollywood are not part of the revolutionary contract. This is not, as the pro-communist left implies, to lessen one's criticism of HUAC—or McCarthy. It goes without saying that HUAC was itself a Hollywood show, out for publicity, using illegitimate pressure tactics: it was not seriously anti-communist. But to connect its unsavory practices with the agonizing predicaments of the liberal ex-Communists, as Navasky often does by free association, is neither just nor enlightening. And, as Navasky himself indicates, the Hollywood Communists and fellow travelers were not simply opposing HUAC on grounds of political and psychological purity. They did not want to lose their jobs. (Yet it is worth noting that some of Navasky's contempt for those who named names comes from his assumption that they did so in order not to be fired.)

The fact is that the phenomenon of the Hollywood radicals was one of the first instances of radical chic in this country. A few were revolutionaries: most were not. Many joined the party when it was playing down its revolutionary aims. On the whole, they were not the most serious writers or intellectuals. They were taken in (as Navasky inadvertently suggests when he quotes the foolish debate, initiated by Albert Maltz in the *New Masses*, about how far writers could stray from the party line) by the high-sounding but vulgar Marxist formulations of the party, by the fact that Russian terror was masked by a humanitarian face. At one point in the book, Navasky speaks of the superficial, celebrity-creating—yes, middlebrow—world of Hollywood, but he does not draw any conclusions about the political frivolity and the psychological shallowness of communism in the movie industry. For example, Navasky describes how communism was brought to Hollywood by V. J. Jerome, a party hack who by default became the party theoretician, the cultural commissar. There is no inkling of the absurd rabbinical mind of Jerome, or of his conspiratorial purposes, when Navasky says, after acknowledging that Jerome engaged in crude literary polemics: "But to portray Lawson or even the cultural bureaucrat V. J. Jerome as nothing but censors is maybe to miss their most complicated aspect." The only complexity to be found in these functionaries was in the political acrobatics and double-talk they engaged in to hide their aims from the show-biz intellectuals they tried to recruit. Hollywood represented the conversion of revolutionary barricades into a bandwagon for celebrities. Despite HUAC's inflationary tactics, communism was no threat in this country. All it captured was an outpost in Hollywood, a foothold in the publishing industry in New York, and a sprinkling of academics.

WHATEVER the reasons for Navasky's myopic view of the Hollywood scene, he fails to explain either the communist or the anti-communist mind. The corrupting force for Navasky is the "cold war," which he regards as an American disease. For some reason, never made clear, the Soviet Union and the Communist party are seen as victims of the cold war, having had nothing to do with instigating it. Given this *deus ex machina*, it follows that not only HUAC but the liberals and radicals who opposed Stalinism because it perverted the idea of socialism were all puppets of the cold war. On the other hand, Navasky exaggerates the idealism of the Communists, and though he mentions such grubbier motives as fear, financial considerations, and party discipline, he plays them down. He does not seem to be aware of the power of the party to enforce its orders. Nor does he seem to realize that members often had serious qualms about the party, but were held in line ideologically by the rationalization that the party, for all its faults, represented a greater good, and personally by the fear of ostracism and the loss of the community they belonged to. Indeed, one of Navasky's own premises throughout is that much can be excused in a move-

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ment that claims to represent a beneficient vision of the future.

When it comes to the liberal anti-communists, including those who "named names" and those who did not, Navasky reduces the complexity of their thinking to a few homilies about being for or against the establishment—although he does quote at length the disillusionment and revulsion against communism of such "turncoats" as Schulberg and Kazan. He depoliticizes and dehumanizes the crises of conscience and belief that ex-Communists went through before their final break. Communists sometimes took years to free themselves from the idea promoted by the party that it was the only instrument of social change and liberation. It was not like resigning from the Boy Scouts. Nor does he go into the campaigns of slander and persecution by the Communists, and their practice of blacklisting former members and liberal anti-communists. He does not seem to understand that anti-communists thought of Communists as apologists for a regime as repressive as right-wing dictatorships and for a party that stopped at nothing to achieve its ends.

Perhaps the greatest weakness of *Naming Names* is Navasky's dismissal of the liberal anti-communist community, which he does not properly distinguish from reactionary anti-communism. For one thing, he cannot understand the opposition of liberals to both McCarthyism and communism—to the menace on the right as well as on the left. Therefore he cannot see why liberal anti-communists could be against HUAC but could not defend the Communists. Defend the Communists for what? For the right to lie, for the right to a lucrative job, much more lucrative than their own, for the right to act as apologists and propagandists for a totalitarian regime, and one which democratic socialists believed stood in the way of a true socialist movement? Nor does Navasky seem to recognize that the liberal anti-communist world has consisted of our most distinguished writers and thinkers and has kept alive a spirit of criticism and dissidence without which radical doctrines become easily perverted. One wonders whether Navasky has not confused his friends with his enemies by reversing the roles of the Communists and anti-communists, and failing to realize that it was the liberal anti-communists and not the Communists who stood for a humane and open society.

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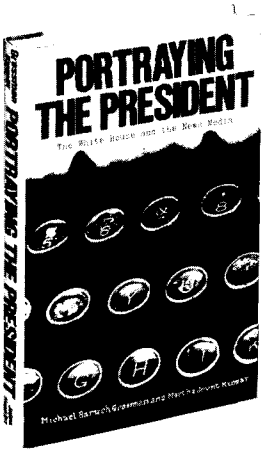

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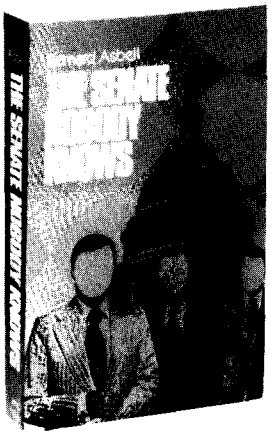

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Navasky's anti-anti-communist slant comes out most clearly when he attacks the American Jewish Committee and the anti-communist liberals for insisting that their anti-communism was more serious and more effective than that of HUAC. I fail to understand Navasky's objection—unless, of course, he is actually against any kind of anti-communism. Surely we can only admire the heroism and political consciousness of those intellectual dissidents in the Soviet Union and the satellite countries who are critical of the anti-communism of the right.

There are other flaws in Navasky's argument, such as his quoting Sissela Bok on lying to bolster his case, when her book states that lying in the long run hurts both the liar and the community as a whole; when he quotes Kai Erikson on the early rituals of expiation (which have nothing to do with the Communists and anti-communists); or when he cites Robert J. Lifton's studies of survivors, which are equally irrelevant here. Perhaps Navasky's most tasteless analogy is between the naming of names in the 1950s and the understandable betrayals in the desperate struggle for survival in the Nazi extermination camps.

Nevertheless, despite my disagreements with Navasky's presentation of his position, and my criticism of his political views, I should say that the book is a valuable documentary for those who want to learn or to refresh their memories of the exposés of Communists in the 1950s.

But, here too, I have to quarrel with what I take to be the message of the book—with its hidden political agenda. For I think Navasky—and those who share his politics—are misreading the current situation of the country. Navasky appears to be taking the old left-liberal stance, limited largely to supporting economic and social reform here and abroad, and of blaming all our ills on America's "cold war" policies. Economic justice and minority rights are certainly indelible parts of the liberal faith we all share. But we cannot have justice without productive growth. The country is now facing a crisis that cannot be solved alone by welfare considerations or the protection of civil liberties. We are facing the decline of American power, the deterioration of the economy, a breakdown of civility, all fed by and contributing to a psychology of anarchy. Reform politics could thrive in an age of economic expansion, but now that our economy has been contracting, measures to revive American industry and restore financial responsibility are required. And it is the failure to recognize that standard liberal reflexes are not adequate to deal with the present crisis that is partly responsible for the defeats of liberalism and the disarray of the Democratic party.

Living in the past has never been recommended as a guide to the future. And it confuses our political priorities to resurrect the debates of the 1950s, particularly those over the agonizing questions of whether to tell or not to tell, with a view to persuading us that these provide political instruction for our time. Navasky closes his book with the warning that we should not "delegate our conscience to the state," which is a rather slurring reference to what he claims liberal anti-communists did. But one has to ask where Navasky's own conscience—and politics—are located. Missing from his political world is a concern over Poland, Afghanistan, the PLO, OPEC, international terrorism, or the growing anti-Semitism. Navasky is obviously trying to formulate a politics for the 1980s, but they often seem to be reminiscent of the failed politics of the 1960s.

William Phillips

William Phillips teaches at Boston University, edits *Partisan Review*, and is at work on a memoir to be published soon.

Clearing the Stage

Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot by Michael Fried

(University of California Press; $27.50)

In 1772 the American painter Benjamin West drew vast crowds of Londoners to view his historical painting, "The Death of Wolfe." The actor David Garrick, arriving with one of those crowds, assumed Wolfe's pose in the picture, improved on the painted expression, elicited the applause he could command at will, and raised "stealing the show" to a new level of skill and daring.

It is one of those scenes that remind us how thoroughly theatrical the 18th century was. Death on the scaffold or at the guillotine was considered a moment of high theater by spectators and victims alike. Nathan Hale died like a character in Addison's most famous play. Jacques Louis David, the "pageant master of the Revolution," staged the death of Lepeletier, using the actual corpse as a stage prop. He intended to do the same with Marat's body, but it decomposed too rapidly; he had to paint the tableau he first meant to stage.

It may seem strange, then, for Michael Fried to argue that the era's best aestheticians mounted a profound assault on theatricality. Not that it would be surprising for critics to lean against the principal trends in a compensatory way, checking the extremes of theatricality. But Fried's thesis is more daring than that. He sets out to prove that some of the things we have taken as excesses of theatricality—for example, the moral paintings of Greuze—were themselves anti-theatrical in intention and effect. He could even recruit Garrick's dying pose for this thesis, since Diderot said the theater should purge itself of its own faults by the imitation of paintings that "ignore" the beholder.

One of the many paradoxes Diderot studied and elaborated in his criticism was the fact that this "theatrical" age was the first in France to insist on the separation of the play from its audience. This occurred in 1759, when the Comte de Lauraguais paid 30,000 francs to compensate the management of the Comédie for removing seats from their usual place on the stage. For Diderot, clearing viewers from the stage represented a great escape from theatrical posturing. The actors could now appear (through their own contrivance) completely absorbed in the action of the play, not glancing constantly at an audience in their midst.

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According to Fried, Diderot sought an equivalent "absorption" of the characters in a painting. This led to remarkable praise for persons depicted as "cut off" from the beholder—as blind or sleeping or rapt in attention or performing acts almost involuntarily (so no one can distract them). Diderot and other critics found some great virtue in the fact that painted humans were "incommunicado." Why is this?

Fried suggests that communication between "real" people and painted ones violates both worlds, the real one on this side of the canvas and the imagined one seen in it. The beholder deceives himself if he treats painted characters as people in his or her world; and the artist's power to create another world is denied if that world is drawn back out into the beholder's surroundings. In a letter to Sophie Volland in 1762 Diderot wrote:

> If, when one makes a painting, one supposes beholders, everything is lost. The painter leaves his canvas, just as the actor who speaks to the audience steps down from the stage. In supposing that there is no one else in the world except the personages of the painting, Van Dyck's painting [of the blind Belisarius] is sublime. Now this is a supposition that must always be made.

Fried does not slight the difficulties posed to his thesis by the passages where Diderot seems to partake in the action "staged" by a painter, or to "walk through" painted scenery. Here all is paradox, and the secularization of theology seems to lie behind Diderot's attitude toward a separate world created in a painting. The viewer's relation to it is like that of the medieval believer's God to His world—both transcendent and immanent. Indeed, the absorption of the painted characters in their own world is a bit like the exercise of free will by the artist's creatures, who can not only ignore but defy the secular "gods" of art. In his analysis of the 70 plates he assembles in his book, Fried explicates and argues with Diderot in a fascinating intellectual duel. The argument reaches its climax in the treatment of David's "Belisarius" (1781), where the painter has not only juxtaposed the blind hero and the soldier forced to behold his agony, but emphatically separates the soldier's act of seeing from the viewers'.

In earlier paintings, a kind of surrogate viewer was sometimes painted in the foreground, back to the audience, so we participated in his or her activity. The painted viewer was one of us, halfway out into our world. Conversely, we were presented the picture with the viewer, moving halfway into the depicted world. David seems to have made an almost programmatic assault on that way of linking the viewer to the painted action. The soldier stands on the far side of Belisarius, facing out toward us but not seeing us. Rather, he sees a side of Belisarius that we cannot. In a kind of secular Genesis, David magnanimously "frees" his creature to see in his own world what has no existence in the viewers' world.

By taking Diderot seriously on his own terms, Fried delivers us from anachronistic dismissal of certain 18th-century modes of thought. He sees, for instance, that the "hierarchy of genres" was less rigid (and less silly) than modern critics have been willing to see. It is amazing what one can learn when one gives a man like Diderot credit for his keen intelligence.

In fact, my one disappointment with the book lies in Fried's odd refusal to

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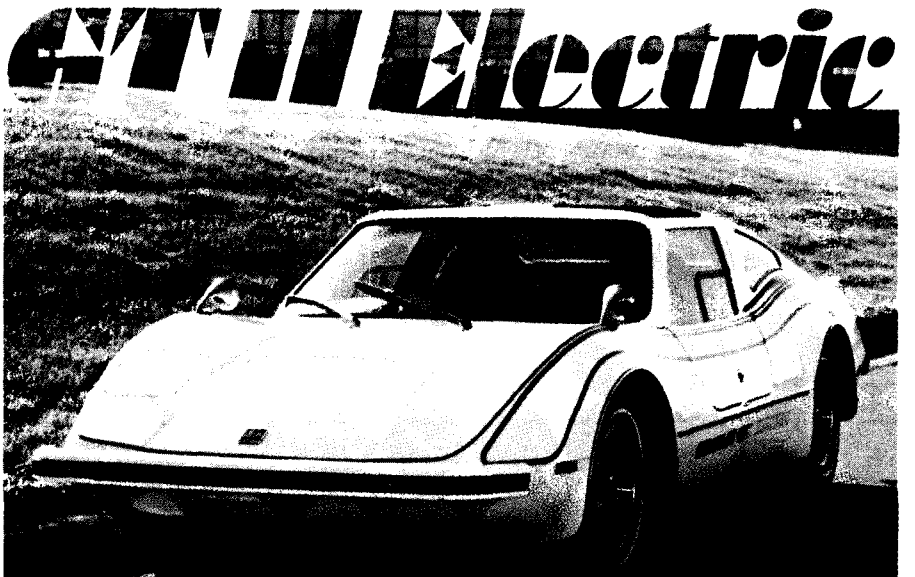

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consider Diderot's most famous work on the theater, *The Paradox of the Actors*. Since that is a late writing (1773-78), Fried says it is less important for Diderot's criticism of Greuze and others than are his *Discussion of 'The Bastard'* (1757) or *Discourse on Dramatic Poetry* (1758). A suspicious reader might think Fried avoids the book because, according to the common view, Diderot reversed his thinking in it. But Fried's one-page reference to *The Paradox* is convincing in its suggestion of a continuity in Diderot's thought—admittedly, an oscillatory continuity, that of paradox. I wish he had pursued this line of thought, since some of Diderot's themes were enriched and made even bolder in the later work. He treats the actor as an "unmoved mover" of audience emotion; yet, conversely, the audience is the cause of the actor's effort. The audience is moved by being *deliberately unaware* of the actor's deliberate artifice. The two "worlds" work by a radical separation. And if the actor's calculations are manipulative, the audience has a higher calculation which allows itself to be moved by a world it has arranged and paid for, yet has freed to go its own way, to turn and wound its makers. The transcendent "god" of a painting's new secular world becomes a suffering god when the audience lets itself be moved by the "supreme fiction" distanced from its orchestra seats. The secularization of the creative act can hardly go further than it did in Diderot's thought.

Garry Wills

Garry Wills's most recent book is *Explaining America: The Federalist* (Doubleday).

Sonya: The Life of Countess Tolstoy by Anne Edwards

(Simon and Schuster; $13.95)

Henry James wrote that the artist was present on every page "from which he had so assiduously sought to remove himself." But he also felt that the artist expended himself totally in his work, and that what was left over was inert and meaningless, a personality drained of all significance. Shakespeare for James was the supreme example of the artist and in his story "The Birthplace" he mercilessly satirized the exploitation of the cult of Shakespeare the Man. What would he have thought of the cult of Tolstoy? He might only have smiled grimly, confirmed in his view that Tolstoy was not an artist at all but a huge phenomenon of nature, a tempestuous and domineering giant who wrote not novels but great shapeless slices of life.

Tolstoy is certainly present on every page he wrote, but it is a different Tolstoy from the one who appears in the innumerable memoirs and biographies that have been written about him, and about his wife. Also, in contradiction of James's law, Tolstoy the man, as he appeared to others in life, is no less fascinating and remarkable than is the Tolstoy of *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*. But he is quite different. The extraordinary achievement of Tolstoy the artist, and the one to which James remained blind, was to create a seeming totality and fidelity of life which has all the harmony and the tranquility of art. As his most penetrating critic, the Russian Jew Lev Shestov, observed, Tolstoy both told the truth about life and dared it to be other than he said it was.

Life had its revenge. Where in his work shall we find Tolstoy as he frequently appeared to his wife Sonya: cold, crude, repellent, inconsiderate, selfish, suddenly seizing her without tenderness and then turning from her with disgust? That was Tolstoy on a day-to-day basis. A visitor to the Tolstoy home, Yasnaya Polyana, during a particularly stormy period remarked that the atmosphere of the place was like nothing so much as a novel by Dostoevsky.

It follows from this that one cannot over-write or vulgarize the story of Tolstoy's home life, which is just as well for Anne Edwards. She over-writes, she vulgarizes. She shamelessly imagines herself into the life of Yasnaya Polyana, rushing into the woods with her heroine to drown herself in the river, or sobbing as Sonya gazes out on three small snow-covered graves just outside the window, and it doesn't matter in the least; in fact it seems the proper way to do it. To write about the pair with taste and tact would not only be unnecessary, it would be misleading. Eternity has not turned Tolstoy into his true self, as Mallarmé and James said it turned the artist, because he had two selves. The one that invites chatter and

Sonya and Leo Tolstoy on their 48th anniversary. Photo from *Sonya*.

gossip and malice and hero-worship—yes, and friendship and admiration too—is uncompromisingly and magnificently accessible. It defends nothing, it extenuates nothing, it asks for nothing.

The diaries that both Tolstoy and his wife kept have already given the game away completely. Art could only stand by and wring its hands over those all-too-human documents. The aging Tolstoy, tormented by the flesh, writes with engaging absurdity and quite without humor: "Sinned again last night, but must not give up the struggle." (To "sin" is, or was, a common term in Russian for having sexual intercourse, even with one's spouse.) Then he solemnly handed the diary to his wife to read and she gave him hers. She too passed between one day and another from utter misery and despair ("He has stopped loving me. Why was I not able to keep his love?" she wrote only a few months after her marriage) to rapturous reconciliations, and back again to jealousy, boredom, and sheer weari-

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ness with the demands her husband made on her.

But she loved him, and it must be said that Anne Edwards successfully conveys the quality of the emotions that accompanied that love. Gush she may, but Sonya gushed too. During the Tolstoys' first years of married life Sonya's sister Tanya lived with them, and furnished the chief model for Natasha in *War and Peace*.

> As she did her wifely chores or copied her husband's manuscripts [Sonya] would often glance out the wide windows of Yasnaya Polyana. And sometimes she would see Tanya running out into the fields with the peasant girls to dig potatoes. Tanya, her laughter streaming behind her like crimson ribbons, young and vibrant, dreaming rapturous dreams that might yet come true . . . gossamer covered the field like a smoky veil; and when Tanya returned, her face flushed with excitement, it clung to her hands, hair and dress. Sonya loved her younger sister deeply, and yet was envious of her youth, her fire, and her enjoyment of life, which enchanted everyone—young and old—including Tolstoy.

OK, so her laughter streamed behind her like crimson ribbons; at least Anne Edwards's way of putting it helps to distance this Tanya from Tolstoy's Natasha, and that is the best service that a biography of this kind can render. Tolstoy himself was fond of Tanya, very fond; Sonya was well aware of the fact. Tolstoy's brother Sergey Nikolaevich was also in love with her. This presented difficulties, of the sort that the art of *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* could not possibly accommodate, for Sergey already had three children by the gipsy mistress with whom he was living, and was about to have a fourth. Tolstoy himself had a son, Timofei, by the peasant mistress Axinia with whom he had been living at Yasnaya Polyana, and the biographer makes justifiable play with the imagined scene when Sonya, as a new bride, comes down in the morning and finds her predecessor scrubbing the floor, her little son playing beside her.

Clearly Sonya was a woman with a strong masochistic streak; she liked

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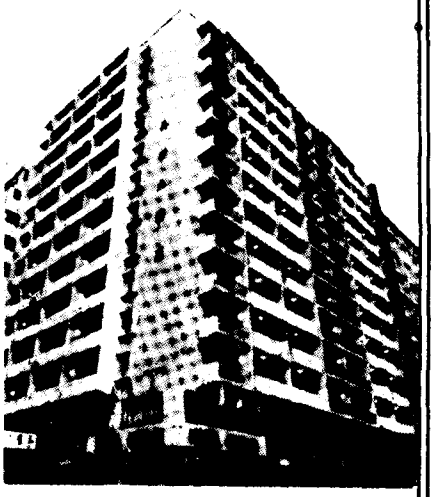

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FRIDAY NIGHT FIGHTS

Slamming down the phone,
she breaks the connection from coast to coast
and shifts to his side of the bed.
What would he do, if he were here now?
The TV screen blooms in monochrome
with the sound off. Like drunks
two boxers stagger to opposite corners
of the ring to recuperate from Round 4
where the challenger spat some blood out
and got his second wind.

The champion, a black boxer in white trunks,
sizes up the challenger,
his negative wearing black; and dances him
to the ropes with systematic punches:
a right, a left uppercut, his gloves
attracted to the bruised magnet of that face
interchangeable with his.

She's absorbing this,
how neither boxer will give in;
even when the challenger's fist recoils
and a rose explodes in the champion's brain,
and he falls across the column
of his partner's body, embracing it,
sliding his arms down the torso
until his face is level
with the black elastic waistband, and beneath,
the cup that guards the man's genitals from harm.

No breastplate shields the heart
from injury. No armor. The ringing begins
and she holds her breath for the count—
seven, eight, nine—her hand wavers
over the receiver. And far away
he hears those words still ringing in his ear,
and can't call them back.

Jane Shore

submitting to Tolstoy's arbitrary whims and prejudices as much as she liked responding to what he called his terrible "lust." But for all her powers of accommodation and devotion—copying out his manuscripts late into the night after he had gone to bed—she never really made him wholly dependent on her, wholly in love with her.

Tolstoy's deepest and most instinctive affections were given to his aunts and through them to the memory of his mother, whom he had barely known. When his wife was ill and bearing children he spent his time playing patience with his old aunt Pelagya, a childhood refuge for him, but a tiresome old woman to Sonya, who had to put up with her in the house. Anne Edwards is perceptive about this. The old aunt died at last, after falling off a chair when she had been trying to adjust an ikon.

> As Sonya held the old woman's hand Aunt Pelagya kept crying out 'je ne veux pas mourir.' But that night she did, and from the moment of her death an intangible wall was flung up between Tolstoy and his wife, a wall that Sonya would try to tear down for the rest of their lives. He finally accepted that fact that his mother was dead and that there was no one who could keep her spirit alive for him. Like Aunt Pelagya Tolstoy did not want to die. With her loss he entered in earnest into a solitary combat with death and set out on a desperate search for the truth about eternal life. All Sonya was left with were what she called 'phantoms.'

After her husband's eventual flight from her at the age of 82, Sonya lived more and more in the past. She died in 1919 still in charge of her house, though it had been occupied by the revolutionaries. Her daughter Tanya, who was to write the best memoir of her father, always remained loyal to her mother, unlike other female members of her family who became "Tolstoyans." The countess Tolstoy never did that.

Like most popular biographies today—Robert Massie's *Nicholas and Alexandra* and his recent *Peter the Great* are examples—this book covers familiar ground, where there are no stones to leave unturned, no fresh secrets to reveal. Anne Edwards lacks Massie's scholarship and wide reading but she knows how to tell a story, though the outlines of it can hardly be unfamiliar today to most readers. Tolstoy may be the last great writer whose domestic affairs the biographer can handle in isolation: the man—or in this case the wife—divorced from the creation in which both were involved. Literary genius, since Tolstoy's time, has tended more and more to realize itself in and through the work, to present the self as a part of, perhaps even as the purpose of, it. The biographer of Hemingway, of Scott Fitzgerald, or of Robert Lowell must also be their most perceptive and understanding critic. Tolstoy comes midway between the author whom James had in mind—the author who, like Shakespeare or the hero of *The Aspern Papers*, is present only and exclusively in his work—and the author of today whose life is his work, or at least is indistinguishable from it.

John Bayley

John Bayley edited *The Portable Tolstoy* (Viking Press).

Brief Reviews

The Shooting Party by Isabel Colgate

(Viking Press; $11.95)

This fine novel is set in England in the portentous fall of 1913; the action takes place over two days of a hunting party held at the Oxfordshire estate of Lord Randolph Nettleby, one of those estimable squires doubtless more common in English fiction than they ever were in English agriculture, subject as that has been to the harsh imperatives of the long capitalist revolution. From the first page we know that someone will be

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killed in the shoot ("It was an error in judgment which resulted in a death. It took place in the autumn before the outbreak of what used to be known as the Great War.") And with admirable skill, Isabel Colgate, who is the author of five previous novels, manages to sustain our suspense about whom it will be as she cuts rapidly from one character to another in the tense closing moments of the shoot. It's such a pleasure to read an accomplished novelist who doesn't regard technique as a species of playing to the pit!

The country setting, the elegiac mood, the shooting party itself, are straight out of Jean Renoir's *Rules of the Game* and, as in that classic French film, we are treated to the kind of "the race is dying out" philosophizing we would miss if it weren't there. The characters are English versions of the bunch from *Rules of the Game*; there is even a poacher, pressed into service to help beat the game out of the woods. There are romances, infidelities, secrets sordid and sad. There are representatives of the classes and of the rural masses. There is a crank Tolstoyan who shows up to demonstrate against the slaughter of the animals just at the very worst moment, and how I wish this preachy presence had never shown up at all!

But the spur to the action is the competition between two members of the party, Lionel Stephens and Lord Hartlip, the latter a crack shot jealous of his reputation. Sir Randolph disapproves of this outbreak of the invidious; he holds to the old view that gentlemen shouldn't compete. When nevertheless they do, shooting hares and pheasants in a mad frenzy, the barbarity of the shooting party breaks out of its ritualized form, and a man is killed.

The shoot itself can't compete with Renoir's massacre for visceral revulsion. But if literature lacks the immediacy of film, it has its compensating resources, and these Ms. Colgate exploits. By enumerating the number of animals killed, for example ("'92 pheasants, 3 hares, 2 woodcock,' said Percy, without reference to his notebook. 'Not too bad. How's everyone else doing, do you know?' 'Lord Hartlip has 88 pheasants, 2 hares, 1 woodcock, sir. No one else to touch the two of you.'"), she makes the shooting party into a symbolic prevision of "the even bigger shooting party that would begin in Flanders the next year," one in which body counts would be the sole measure of victory.

Ms. Colgate's style, which runs to such charming Edwardianisms as "her heart beat faster in the expectation of its being Charles," is perfectly matched to her subject. And she knows her period detail: Sir Randolph's garden is surrounded by a "ha-ha," and Lady Hartlip wears a "fichu" around her neck. But what makes the novel distinctive is her subtle rendering of manners. She knows with what combination of respect and condescension Sir Randolph would address his gamekeeper; knows how Lionel Stephens would sound in a love letter; knows that in this rural England a poor man can die with "God save the British Empire!" on his lips without anyone thinking it odd or mawkish. She explores this world with affection and distance, recording its grace as well as its cruelty, setting it off now from this point of view and now from that in order to see it whole, and finally making it both meaningful and moving.

Jack Beatty

Cities of the Red Night by William S. Burroughs

(Holt, Rinehart & Winston; $14.95)

William Burroughs teases us in his latest novel. He hints that the strands of his story will connect, that past and future will become part of a single continuum of time, and that the ordeals of his plagued and delirious characters will coalesce into a comprehensible quest. Maybe intelligibility is too much to expect of the author of such wildly disordered works as *Naked Lunch* and *Nova Express*. But for a while it seems as though *Cities of the Red Night* might be different, might actually represent the mastering of the hallucinogenic energy that has powered Burroughs's writing.

For one thing, there is the book's foreword, which suggests that *Cities of the Red Night* is a fanciful spin-off from a historical premise: the story of an 18th-century pirate who founded an African colony on the later popular principles of liberty, fraternity, and equality. The colony, Burroughs writes, was destroyed by natives, and, with its destruction, "your right to live where you want, with companions of your choosing, under laws to which you agree, died." To restore this utopia retroactively is Burroughs's imaginative goal. In the attempt, he leads the hapless reader through a series of anti-utopias, horrific vistas of sex and death, detailed with a relentless vigor only a connoisseur of snuff films could appreciate.

The very prose style of *Naked Lunch* was a warning: the stream of consciousness narration left no doubt that time, place, and identity were fluid, and no conventions of plot and character were to be observed. But in *Cities of the Red Night*, the sentences scan. Individual chapters actually make sense. Before hopeless narrative chaos takes over, about midway through, we have been led to expect that the tales of Noah Blake, an 18th-century gunsmith who invents a cartridge gun and an exploding cannonball, and "private asshole" Clem Snide, who searches for the body of a bizarrely murdered boy, will somehow merge. And that both will elucidate the torments of the cities of the title, where a radioactive virus causes its victims to expire in orgiastic frenzies.

But no such luck. The only certain thing in this novel is the unreliability of reality. Photographs and etchings flicker into live action, an apocalyptic battle metamorphoses first into a fever-induced nightmare and then into a high school play, and Burroughs's characters —whose identities shift as treacherously as time and space—busy themselves remembering scenes from another life they might have lived or forgetting their roles in the play they're now performing.

What lingers most forcefully from *Cities of the Red Night* is a set of recurrent images: of fever victims with silver spots boiling before their eyes; of men hanging from gallows, ejaculating amid death throes; of repeated acts of sodomy (a Burroughs favorite). The smells of this book, more real than its people, leap off the page—the "rank, musty, ozone" odor of time traveling; the sweet, sickly smell of the fever. Burroughs writes for strong stomachs. Here is his description of a torture festival held in one of the Cities of the Red Night: "Of course, the tortured captives will be rendered down into the most exquisite condiments and sweetmeats: raw quivering brains served with a piquant sauce, candied testicles, sweet and sour penis, rectums boiled in chocolate."

Burroughs is supposedly a satirist, attacking a materialism and rapaciousness as crippling as his own former drug addiction. But his fictional world is

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never recognizably our own, even at its war-crazed worst. The demons he depicts in novel after novel seem to be his personal tormentors. Burroughs's prose is pungent, lyrical, abrasive, but the vision it projects remains an irretrievably private one.

Julia M. Klein

Julia M. Klein is a Philadelphia writer.

Correspondence, *from page 5*

the Genesis account of creation into the science classroom because the lay public has insufficient understanding of what is and is not science. While I agree that it is a travesty to present the Genesis story as if it were a respectable scientific theory, I do not see why those concerned about science teaching should wish to ban the Genesis account from the classroom.

It seems to me that a very good way to deal with both problems—the interference by creationists in the teaching of science, and the poor understanding of the nature of science by the public—is to compare the origin and content of the Genesis account with the origin and content of scientific ideas about biological, geological, and stellar evolution. The students would gain an understanding of such concepts as making repeatable observations, formulating unifying hypotheses, and assessing the validity of hypotheses by testing predictions. They would learn that these are essential ingredients of science, and that the Genesis account is not science.

Philip Filner
East Lansing, Michigan

To the editors:

I want to commend Niles Eldredge on a thoughtful and thought-provoking article. He skillfully showed the shortcomings of the popular view of science, and how the creationists have used these to caricature science as a religion. What he did not do was to show the shortcomings of the creationists' view in their own arguments.

Creationists do no service to the faith. Their interpretation of the Bible is characterized by a misconception of what the Bible is and what kind of questions it addresses. The creation accounts in the Bible are not scientific treatises, they are religious and metaphysical ones. The questions they answer begin with "why" and "who," not the "how" and "when" with which scientific questions begin. Mixing up these questions gives rise to a distorted view of how the Bible is relevant to modern life, and leads to false divisions between modern religion and modern science.

David V. Sawyer
Louisville, Kentucky

Reversing evolution

To the editors:

When Justin Kaplan quoted Henry Adams in reviewing William S. McFeely's *Grant: A Biography* (*TNR*, February 28), I hoped that he would add another apt quotation by Adams on Grant: "The progress of evolution from Washington to Grant was alone evidence enough to upset Darwin."

George Johnson
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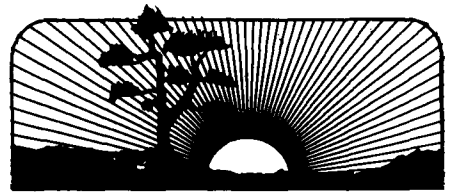

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Washington Diarist

Women's Work

Unlike some *New Republic* staffers whose second favorite publications run to the likes of *National Notary*, mine is *Wellesley*, the Wellesley College alumnae magazine. Four times a year *Wellesley*'s class notes provide an unparalleled look at what women (oh, all right, Wellesley graduates) are thinking and doing. Sure, you can find those funny preppy names. My favorites from the Winter 1981 issue are: Twink, Squee, Doodle, Gigs, Ribs, and Ducky—certainly an improvement on Muffy and Buffy. But this only adds to the magazine's authenticity as a social document. The notes, of course, move chronologically, and would provide grist for one of those multigenerational sagas, especially since going to Wellesley runs in families. The same names keep popping up through the years, as do those of famous people (or their spouses), a device popular in fiction today. Read in one sitting, the notes take on the quality of an address to the ages of women. The graduating classes from the first part of the century are now recording deaths, broken hips, and great-grandchildren. A member of the class of 1917 has a typical entry: "Mayling Soong Chiang writes that after two hospitalizations this year, 'I am at home now and much more comfortable.'" This comes as good news for admirers of Mme. Chiang Kai-shek. Women who graduated in the two decades following 1917 offer news on retirements, travel, and accomplishments of offspring. It's in the notes from the classes of the 1950s to the present that one sees how the women's movement has radically altered the ways in which women choose to live their lives. Class after class has reports from graduates who are moving up in the ranks of places like Citicorp, or practicing neurosurgery. Of course there are still those who are "happily at home tending to Jennifer and Adam." One example, from the class of 1956, shows Margaret Ann Sample O'Donnell staying busy "as chairman of the Board of Directors of the Garden Center, as a student flower show judge, and as a member of the Stitchery Guild," and Mary Estill Henlien Buchanan of Colorado (Wellesley graduates tend to have lots of last names) being congratulated for her close race for the US Senate. And anyone who thinks women aren't still being torn by conflict between their personal and professional lives should read the profile of artist Emilie "Muska" Benes, '53. Ms. Benes's work now consists of making latex molds of tree trunks. The results sell for $600 to $7,000 and look, as the illustrations show, just like tree trunks. She chooses to use her maiden name rather than her married name, which is Brzezinski, because, "As a person, I want to be known as me, not my husband's wife." Her husband, *Wellesley* reveals (surely for the first time), is an artist too. "He does marvelous doodles during boring conferences," says Emilie "Muska" Benes Brzezinski. "They are Paul Klee-like things—structures on paper. I have insisted that he put the dates and the conferences on them." This news must come as a relief to those attending the conferences, who were probably worried Zbigniew was plotting strategy to get even with Cyrus Vance and the Russians. The lead item in the magazine is an interview with Wellesley's newly appointed 11th president, Nannerl Overholser Keohane, class of '61. Keohane, a Stanford political scientist, calls herself a feminist and would like to see the term become a familiar one at Wellesley. She defines it as "a combination of sensitivity to this special situation of women in the past, a commitment in the present to work to lift the barriers of unfair discrimination . . . an enthusiasm about working for a future where individuals will be able to realize their talents regardless of their sex." It all sounds so straightforward if not perfectly obvious that it's hard to understand the discomfort women, particularly young women, have with the term today. Whom are they so afraid of offending?

For some women there is no debate about which path in life to follow. Nancy Reagan is one of those women. Two great passions emerge from her autobiography, *Nancy* (William Morrow): interior decoration and Ronnie. The former has been found wanting, but never the latter. For example, take her description of her daughter Patti's birth: "I thought that Ronnie might be disappointed he had a daughter instead of a son. For some reason I had been sure I was going to have a boy. I needn't have worried. Ronnie told my mother that having a daughter would be like seeing me as a little girl in all the years before he knew me. When Mother told me this I started to cry, then she started to cry and we had a grand time together." It's not known whether Jane Wyman cried upon hearing those same sentiments, but she must have responded favorably. As master of the right thing to say, the president probably wouldn't risk repeating something that hadn't gone over the first time. Among the nuggets unearthed by the *Washington Post* in a retrospective on the treatment of Ronnie and Jane in the movie magazines during their heyday was an item revealing that upon the birth of Maureen, Ronnie assured Jane he was thrilled to have a daughter because it would be like seeing Jane as a little girl in all the years before he knew her. Why anyone should be disappointed at the birth of a daughter is a question for another day.

It's tax time, and if anyone has doubts about the Reagan administration's belief that tax laws affect human behavior, I have some proof. At a party last Christmas, one of the guests, an obstetrician, remarked that she had to work Christmas weekend, but at least it would not be as busy as the following weekend. I asked her how she could be so certain. "Well, next weekend is the last weekend of the year," she replied, "and lots of people induce their babies then so that they can get the tax break."

Some very bad planning has robbed the lovely Rita Jenrette of the full 15-minute half-life of celebrityhood due anyone who engages in unsavory acts in Washington and wants to discuss his or her behavior in public. The unveiling of the equally lovely Paula Parkinson, Washington's foremost horizontal lobbyist, has cut drastically into Rita's full moment in the sun. These people really should coordinate their revelations better. The confessions of these two (see Charles Krauthammer's "The Cult of Confession," *TNR*, February 21) probably will have some inhibitory effect on that wonderful exuberence which characterizes our legislators. It probably will be months before tourists will be able to enjoy a glimpse of love-making on the Capitol steps. And it could take years until the next member of Congress confidently enters a bedroom equipped with videotape cameras. In fact, it appears that legitimate lobbyists are concerned that the outbreak of what is being called "Parkinson's disease" will have a deleterious effect on a profession in which image is paramount. Paula, it seems, has given women lobbyists a bad name.

E. Y.

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